24-Hour Holter Monitor

A Holter (HOLE ter) monitor is a small device (about the size of a deck of cards). It is used to get a 24-hour record (tracing) of your child’s heart rate and rhythm. The monitor will show anything unusual about his or her heartbeat. It does not hurt.

How the test is done

Your child will come to the hospital to get his Holter monitor. After the monitor is recording, you may take him home.

The skin on your child’s chest will be cleaned in three to five areas with an alcohol swab. A sticker (electrode) attached to a wire by a snap will be placed on the chest in each of the cleaned areas (Picture 1). The wires will then be attached to the Holter monitor, which your child will wear inside a small carrying case. The case fits on a belt at the child’s waist or over the shoulder on a strap.

The Holter monitor collects and saves a record of your child’s heart beats.

You will hear a series of beeps for one minute when the monitoring period starts. The beeps tell you the device is recording. A green light on the monitor will flash during the 24-hour recording period. The monitor will shut off by itself at the end of the 24 hours.

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How the test is done, continued

You will be given a diary to record your child’s activities while he or she wears the monitor. Please record times asleep and awake, physically active and quiet times, and times that the child takes medicine. Also, record any symptoms that occur while your child is wearing the monitor. You will press the square button on the carrying case to document the symptom in the recorded data.

Risks and possible complications

Patients may have mild reactions to the electrodes. This can cause redness, itching or a faint rash at the site of the electrode that will fade with time after the electrodes have been removed.

If an electrode loosens during monitoring, please replace it with a new (spare) electrode you will be given at the time you get the monitor. If the wire comes off, simply snap it back onto the electrode. You will be given a diagram to show the correct color and location of each wire.

Special instructions

- Do not let your child take a shower or a bath, or go swimming with the monitor on.
- The child can wash his or her hair in the sink as long as the chest remains dry.
- Do not remove the monitor until the 24-hour recording period is completed.

After the test

After the monitoring period is finished, remove the electrodes from your child’s chest and throw them away. Immediately place the wires, Holter monitor, case, strap and diary in the self-addressed, postage-paid priority mail box that you got along with the Holter monitor and mail back to Nationwide Children’s Hospital.

Activity

Your child should do all normal activities while wearing the monitor unless his or her doctor tells you otherwise.

It takes about 10 days for the test results to be completed once we get the monitor back. When the report is ready, your child’s doctor will discuss the test results with you, along with any plans for more medical care.