What is a holter monitor?
A holter monitor is a machine that looks similar to a small tape recorder. Sticky pads are attached to your chest and wires from the monitor are attached to the pads. The holter monitor is usually worn for 12 to 72 hours. It keeps a record of your heart rate (how fast your heart beats) and your heart rhythm (how regularly your heart beats). This lets your doctor see how your heart reacts to rest and activity. Since the monitor is worn for several hours or days, it is helpful in finding problems with your heart rate or rhythm that may not show up during your visit to the doctor or on an EKG.

Technicians at the hospital or in the doctor’s office will put on the monitor. You will wear the monitor wherever you go and will keep a diary of your activities and how you feel.

How is holter monitoring done?
- There is no special preparation to wear a holter monitor.
- The electrodes (patches) are put on your chest after the nurse or technician cleans your skin. Alcohol may be used to dry the skin where each patch will be. If you have a lot of hair on your chest, some may be clipped so that the patches will stick.
- The monitor is small and the case has a strap so that you can carry it on your shoulder. It can be worn in public without much notice.

Keeping a diary
You will be asked to keep a record or diary while you are wearing the holter monitor. You will need to record when you are doing extra activity (such as exercising) or when you are having any symptoms or problems. The diary will let your doctor see if there is a connection between the symptoms you are having and what was happening at the same time with your heart rate. Be sure to write the time that is on the recorder (not your watch) and then your symptom or activity.

You should write down when you:
- Have chest pain or get short of breath
- Have fast or pounding heart beats
- Feel faint, weak, or blackout
- Have any unusual feeling
- Do any exercise
- Have a bowel movement

Special Precautions:
- Do not take a tub bath or shower while you are wearing the monitor. You may get a shock from the batteries in the monitor or the patches on your chest may come off if they get wet.
- Do not remove the monitor from its case.
- Do not take the wires or patches off or do anything to make them loose.
- If a patch does come off, write this in the diary and try to tape the patch back on until you can get to the doctor’s office or to the hospital for a new one. Make a note in the diary of the time the patch comes off.

When to Seek Help:
If you have severe chest pain or shortness of breath, call your doctor or call 911, or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

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