ELECTROPHYSIOLOGIC STUDIES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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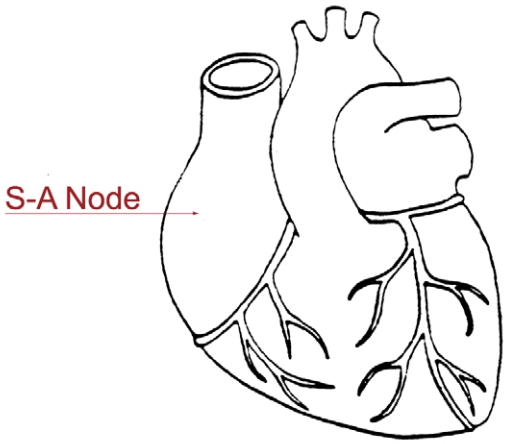
What are EP studies?

EP studies are a way to evaluate the electrical function of your heart. Your heart is a muscle which pumps blood through your body. In order to pump correctly, your heart uses a special electrical system. A signal or impulse begins in the top part of the heart and travels down to the lower part of the heart. This signal tells your heart how and when to beat.



Your heart's natural pacemaker, the S-A Node, sends electrical signals through your heart to cause it to beat.

Why are EP studies done?

EP studies are done to pick up abnormalities in the heart's electrical system. These include:

- The signals that are sent out too slowly from the top of the heart.
- The signals that are blocked and cannot reach the bottom of the heart.
- The signals that come from the wrong part of the heart.
- The signals that travel the wrong path from the top of the heart to the bottom.

Any of these abnormalities can cause a decrease in the heart's ability to pump blood to the body.

EP studies will help your doctor determine which medicine is best for your condition or if another treatment would be better.

Your doctor will discuss why you need EP studies as well as the possible risks and complications of the test.

How do I prepare for EP studies?

Before your test, you will be on a special floor in the hospital where your heart will be monitored constantly.

If your test is in the morning, you should not eat or drink anything after midnight. If your test is in the afternoon, you will have breakfast but no lunch.

You will sign a permit which allows the doctor to do the studies.

You will need to wear a hospital gown.

When it is time for your test, you will be taken to a special exam room on a stretcher.

What happens during EP studies?

Once you are in the exam room, you will be asked to lie on a table. Electrodes (skin patches with wires) will be placed on your chest to record your electrocardiogram (EKG)

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To do EP studies, a small wire must be positioned in the heart. This should not harm your heart in any way.

First, the doctor will was two areas of your skin. The places he washes will be the left groin and collar bone or the right groin and collar bone.

Next, these areas will be made numb with a special medicine to prevent any pain as the wire is put in place. You may feel a little discomfort as the doctor numbs these areas.

Once your skin is numb, a needle will be put through the skin and into a large vein. The wire will be put through the needle, into the vein, and positioned in the heart. An X-ray machine will be used watch the wire go into your heart.

It is very important for you to lie still while the doctor is putting the wire in place.

You may be given medication during the study that will make you relaxed or sleepy.

Once in place, the wire will be connected to a pacing device. This device will be used to pace your heart's electrical system. This part of the test will take about an hour. Since more than one exam, over several days, may be needed to do your studies, the wire at your collar bone may be left in place until the studies are complete. This wire will be taped and a bandage put over it before you go back to your room. The wire in your leg will be removed.

What happens after EP studies?
When you return to your room, you may resume your normal activities once you are no longer sleepy.

You will be able to eat your usual diet.

When the studies are completed, the doctor will remove the wire from your collar bone area.

Your doctor will talk with you about the results of your test and make plans for your treatment.

We hope this information will help you have a more comfortable test. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk with your doctor or nurse. Sometimes just knowing what will happen makes it easier.

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