

## **Electrocardiogram (ECG)**

The electrocardiogram is commonly used to detect abnormal heart rhythms and to investigate the cause of chest pains.

### **What is an electrocardiogram ?**

An electrocardiogram or ' ECG' records the electrical activity of the heart. The heart produces tiny electrical impulses which spread through the heart muscle to make the heart contract. These impulses can be detected by the ECG machine. You may have an ECG to help find the cause of symptoms such as palpitations or chest pain. Sometimes it is done as part of routine tests, for example before you have an operation. The ECG test is painless and harmless (the ECG machine records electrical impulses coming from your body- it does not put any electricity into your body).

### **How is it done?**

Small metal electrodes are stuck onto your arms, legs and chest. *Therefore, gentlemen, please be aware that you may need to have your chest shaved and ladies it is important not to use body lotions before the procedure otherwise the electrodes will not stick.* Wires from the electrodes are connected to the ECG machine. The machine detects and amplifies the electrical impulses that occur each heartbeat and records them onto a paper or computer. A few heartbeats are recorded from different sets of electrodes. The test itself only takes about five minutes to complete.