

ELECTROPHYSIOLOGICAL STUDY

WHAT IS IT?

Electrophysiology (EPS) studies the electrical activity of the heart in patients who have irregular heartbeats (arrhythmias). EPS shows the reaction of the heart to electrical impulses. These signals help your Cardiologist find out where the arrhythmia starts and what medicines or other therapies may help control it.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Do not eat anything or drink anything up to 6 hours before your test. If you have diabetes, you should talk to your Cardiologist about your food and insulin intake, as these can affect your blood sugar levels. Also enquire whether the medicines that you currently take should be stopped before this test as some medicines, particularly Warfarin, can cause significant complications. Also, please bring a list of your medicines with you to the procedure.

You will most likely have blood tests, an ECG and a chest x-ray before the test. Once you are in the electrophysiology laboratory, you will see television monitors, heart monitors and blood pressure machines. You will lie on an examination table, which is usually near an x-ray camera.

Small metal disks called electrodes are placed on your chest. These electrodes have wires called leads, which attach to an electrocardiogram machine and monitor your heart rhythm during the test. Sometimes a general anaesthetic is given before the procedure, although most procedures are performed under sedation and local anaesthetic. To prevent infection, the nurse shaves and cleans the area of your leg where the cardiologist will insert the catheters.

A local anaesthetic numbs this area and usually prevents any pain during the procedure, although, you may feel some mild discomfort for about 20 seconds after this injection. Next, the Cardiologist makes a small incision in the skin, feeds the catheter into a vein or artery in your leg and then up to your heart.

Once the catheter is in place, the Cardiologist will give your heart small electrical impulses to make it beat at different speeds. The catheters will record the response to these impulses.

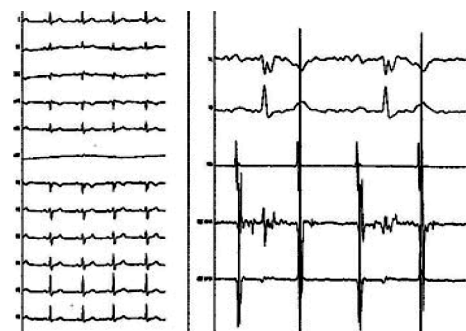
You will be able to feel your heartbeat changing speeds and this may feel strange. The Cardiologist will remove the catheter after acquiring all of the necessary information and the catheter will be removed. Firm pressure will be applied to the site where the catheter was inserted to stop any bleeding.

You will be moved to another room where you will need to rest for a few hours. You may feel a little sleepy until the sedative has worn off. You must try to lie still and not bend your knee too much. Nurses will watch to see that your heart rate and blood pressure are normal.

After this time of rest, you should be able to go home. You need to be gentle with the puncture site for a day or so no heavy lifting. You should not drive for 24 hours after the test.

Usually the doctor will have the results available at the end of the test. They will advise you about any further treatments required or changes to existing treatment.

You should read the consent form and understand the risks involved with this procedure. Please clarify any concerns or queries about this procedure with your Cardiologist before signing this form.



▲ Example of electrical recordings of the heart acquired during an electrophysiological study



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