



# What Are Electrophysiologic Tests?

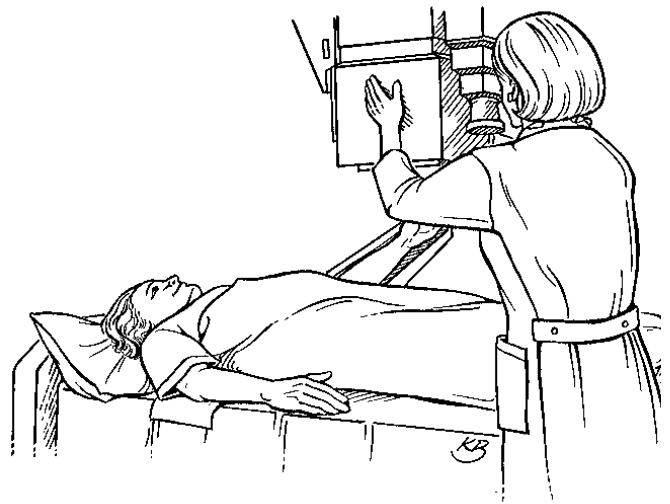
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## Why do I need them?

Electrophysiologic tests are done to find out why your heart is not beating in a regular way. These tests study the electrical flow in your heart.

The results can help your doctor find where an arrhythmia (abnormal heartbeat) is coming from and decide whether you need medicine, a pacemaker, an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), cardiac ablation or surgery. If you're on medicine, the test will show if it is working to prevent arrhythmias.

These tests take place in an electrophysiology (EP) lab or catheterization laboratory.



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## What is arrhythmia?

- Your heartbeats are abnormal – too fast, too slow or irregular.
- Your body may not get the blood it needs.
- Your heart may feel like it flutters.
- You may get dizzy or faint.

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## What is cardiac mapping?

- It's an electrophysiologic test that "maps" the electrical system of your heart.
- It tells your doctor what part of the heart the abnormal heartbeats are coming from.

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## How is it done?

- You go to the hospital's heart catheterization laboratory or "cath lab."
- You'll be awake during the test but may be given medicine to help you relax.
- The test may take several hours.
- You lie on a hard table near an X-ray camera and other equipment.
- Your doctor numbs a spot on your groin or arm and inserts thin tubes, or catheters, into veins.
- The doctor moves the catheters to find the problem area in your heart.
- The tips of the catheters are like sensors and can tell the doctor why the heart isn't beating with the right rhythm.

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## What is cardiac ablation?

- Cardiac ablation is a way to fix an arrhythmia and get your heart to beat the right way.
- It takes longer than cardiac mapping.
- One or more catheters are put in one or more veins.
- On the end of the catheter is a tip that will transmit painless energy.
- This will cause the heart muscle cells in a very small area (about 1/5 of an inch) to die.
- When the cells die, the abnormal rhythm will stop, so your heart can return to a normal rhythm.

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## What happens afterwards?

- The catheters will be taken out.
- A nurse or doctor will apply direct pressure to the punctured spots for 15 minutes or longer to make sure there's no bleeding.
- You'll be asked to lie quietly on your back for several hours.
- Your doctor will talk to you about the results.
- You may stay in the hospital overnight.
- You can resume normal activities in a few days.

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## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

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## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

Do I have to take more tests?

Is cardiac ablation a cure?