



Holter monitoring

Your clinician has recommended that you undergo Holter monitoring. This leaflet provides detailed information regarding the test and why it is being carried out.

What is a Holter monitor?

A Holter monitor is a small device that is worn continuously to record your heart (cardiac) activity over a defined period of time. It works using 3 small adhesive sensors (electrodes) placed on the skin, which pick up the heart's electrical signals. These signals are sent to a recording unit worn on the body, where the information is kept. When the device is returned, the information is looked at both a health professional.

Depending on the reason for doing the test and your individual symptoms, the monitor is worn for anything from 24 hours up to 14 days while you continue your normal daily activities. This extended monitoring period helps healthcare professionals to assess your heart rhythm in greater detail.

You do not need to stay in hospital while wearing the monitor. You can continue your usual daily activities during the test, unless told otherwise.

Why do I need a Holter monitor?

A Holter monitor is used to help identify irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias) that may not be detected during a standard electrocardiogram (ECG), which only records your heart's activity for a short period of time.

It is particularly helpful if you experience symptoms such as:

- Palpitations (feeling your heart racing or skipping beats)
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Fainting (syncope)

A Holter monitor records continuously over many hours or days, which increases the chance of finding any occasional heart irregularities, including those that occur overnight. This helps your healthcare team to better understand your symptoms and plan any further investigations or treatment if required.

Preparing for your Holter monitor

- You can eat and drink as normal.
- Take a shower or bath before attending your appointment.
- Avoid using body lotion, body oil, sun cream or talc on the morning of your appointment as this may prevent the electrodes sticking to the skin.

- If you have sensitive skin or any skin conditions, please discuss this with the cardiac practitioner on the day of your appointment, prior to having the Holter monitor fitted.
- Wear a loose-fitting top.
- Notify us before the day of your appointment if you would prefer a male or female practitioner; we will do our best to accommodate your request.
- Please continue to take all medications as normal unless told otherwise by your doctor.

Getting to us

Please refer to your appointment letter for the location of your appointment. It is essential you **check the location of your appointment before attending.**

We provide Holter monitoring at the following sites:

Royal Berkshire Hospital: Cardiology Department, Battle Block, Level 1, Craven Road, Reading RG1 5AN

Royal Berkshire Hospital: Cardiology Concourse, Centre Block, Level 2, Craven Road, Reading RG1 5AN

Townlands Memorial Hospital: Main Outpatients Department, York Road, Henley-On-Thames, RG9 2DR

West Berkshire Community Hospital: Main Outpatients Department, London Road, Benham Hill, Thatcham, RG18 3AS

When should I arrive?

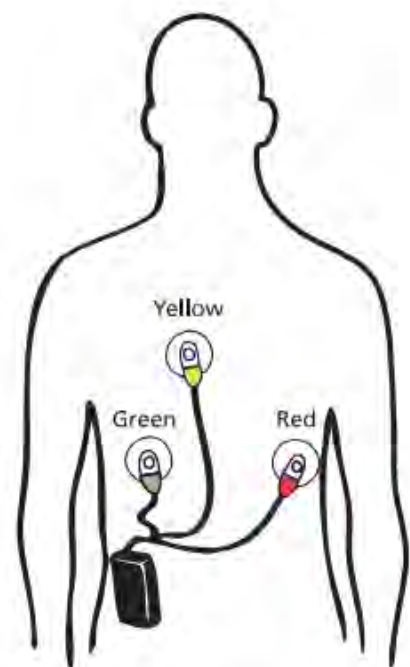
Arrive at the department approximately 10 minutes before your scheduled appointment time. **Allow extra time for parking**, as if you arrive late we may need to rearrange your appointment. When you arrive, please check in at reception or inform the cardiac practitioner.

On the day of your appointment

During your appointment you will be taken to a private consultation room. A cardiac practitioner will discuss the following with you:

- the purpose of the Holter monitoring,
- confirm your symptoms,
- check for any allergies,
- check the correct device is present,
- and confirm that you are happy to proceed.

Once you have confirmed you are happy to go ahead, you will be asked to undress to the waist. The practitioner will clean the skin where the electrodes will be placed. This helps the electrodes to stick firmly throughout the recording period. Any chest hair close to the electrode sites may need to be shaved.



Once the 3 electrodes have been stuck in place (see diagram, right), they will be connected to the Holter monitor, which is usually clipped to a belt or waistband. The fitting process usually takes around 15 minutes.

The device will then record your heart's electrical activity continuously for the entire monitoring period. The duration of monitoring period will be confirmed by the practitioner during your appointment.

You may continue with your normal daily activities; however, you must avoid getting the monitor wet. Specific guidance will be provided regarding showering.

Your symptom diary

During your appointment, you will be given a symptom diary to fill in to record the date, time and details of any symptoms you experience while wearing the monitor. This information is used to help match your symptoms with any heart rhythm changes detected during the recording.

Only record the typical symptoms that led to your referral to cardiology (for example, palpitations, dizziness, or chest discomfort). This helps make sure the results are clinically relevant to any heart condition. There is no need to include unrelated symptoms such as headaches or general aches and pains.

When recording symptoms, please make sure you use the time displayed on the front of the monitor. That way we can see what the Holter monitor readings were at that time.

Please indicate in the diary if you experience any of the following:

- Light-headedness or dizziness
- Fainting or collapse
- Breathlessness
- Palpitations

Important information

- The device records continuously; therefore, you must **not swim** while wearing it.
- Depending on the duration of your monitoring period, you may be advised **not to bathe or shower** while the Holter monitor is in place. If your recording lasts longer than 2 days, specific guidance will be provided regarding washing.
- You should continue with your normal daily activities.
- The monitor must be worn **day and night** for the entire recording period.
- Do not alter or reposition the monitor unless instructed by the health care professional.
- You may use your mobile phone and other electrical devices as normal.

Please do not:

- DO NOT stand directly in front of a microwave while it is operating; however, you may still use the microwave as normal.
- DO NOT sleep with an electric blanket switched on while wearing the Holter monitor.
- DO NOT use a TENS machine during the monitoring period.

Returning the monitor

Once the monitoring period has ended, remove the device, dispose of the electrodes in the normal waste, and place the monitor in the red bag provided.

Please return the monitor on the date and time agreed with the cardiac practitioner during your appointment. This is so we can look at your results as soon as possible after the test and also allow us to use the monitor for another patient.

Monitors should be returned to the same site where the fitting was carried out.

Where to drop your monitor off:

Royal Berkshire Hospital

Please place the monitor, in the red bag provided, into the black drop box located either outside the Cardiology Department or within the Cardiology Concourse. Alternatively, you may return it in person to the Cardiology Reception during opening hours (8am–5pm Monday to Friday).

Townlands Memorial Hospital

Please return the monitor to the Main Outpatient Reception, Monday to Friday 8am-5pm.

West Berkshire Community Hospital

Please return the monitor to the Main Outpatient Reception, Monday to Friday 8am-5pm.

Results

Once the monitor has been returned, the recording will be downloaded and analysed. The analysis usually takes between 2 and 4 weeks, although this may vary depending on the urgency and waiting times.

The results will be sent to your referring clinician, who will contact you if any further action is required. For any queries regarding your results, please contact your referring clinician directly.

Additional requirements

For patients with additional requirements, please contact the department in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

- Hospital transport — if you are using hospital transport, please make sure that transport is arranged for both your monitor-fitting appointment and your return visit.
- Patients arriving on a stretcher — if you will be arriving on a stretcher, please contact the department in advance on 0118 322 6676 so that suitable arrangements can be made for both fitting and returning the Holter monitor.
- Children and supervision — children must not be left unattended in the waiting area. Staff are unable to supervise children, so please make sure appropriate childcare arrangements are in place. Failure to do so may result in your appointment being rescheduled.

Useful contacts

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 11) 0118 322 6676 or email rbb-tr.cat11@nhs.net
Holter fitting queries 0118 322 5489
Cardiology Reception Enquiries 0118 322 6515
British Heart Foundation: www.bhf.org.uk

This leaflet is printed privately for the Cardiac Fund. It was set up in 1976 for the purpose of providing cardiac services that would otherwise not be available through National Health resources. Our Cardiac Laboratory was largely equipped through the fund and many other areas in the Department have also benefited from equipment and staff training.



If you would like to contribute please scan the QR code below to donate direct to the fund online, alternatively, cheques should be made payable to:



The Royal Berks Charity Cardiac Fund U226

Royal Berks Charity
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust London Road
Reading RG1 5AN Telephone 0118 322 8860 www.royalberkscharity.co.uk

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Cardiology Department, May 2026
Next review due: May 2028