Telemetry Monitoring

For patients who need heart monitoring while in hospital

Read this brochure to learn more about:

• what telemetry monitoring is
• how it works
• what activities are safe
• who to ask if you have questions
What is telemetry monitoring?
When you are admitted to the hospital, your doctor or nurse practitioner may ask you to begin telemetry monitoring. Telemetry is a way for your health care team to check your heart rhythm while you are in the hospital.

How does it work?
The telemetry monitor has 5 wires that are connected to sticker pads called electrodes.

A member of your health care team puts the pads in different places on your chest. These pads and wires pick up signals from your heart and send them to the telemetry unit. The unit changes these signals into a picture of your heart rhythm.

Nurses watch the pictures of your heart rhythm from a monitoring station 24 hours a day. As long as you are wearing the unit the nurses can see if there is a change in your heart. This information helps your health care team plan your medications and treatments while you are in the hospital.
What can I expect?
While you are wearing the telemetry monitor:

• It does not fix any of your heart problems.
• It does not check your blood pressure or “shock” your heart.
• It will not cause you pain.

Why do I need it?
You may need telemetry monitoring if you:

• have a certain type of heart or lung disease
• have had irregular heart rhythms in the past
• are taking medications that may cause changes in heart rhythms
• have had fainting spells that are caused by a heart problem
• have had a pacemaker or defibrillator
• have had any heart surgery or procedure

How long will I need to wear it?
Your doctor or nurse practitioner will let you know how long you need telemetry monitoring. Ask your nurse, doctor or nurse practitioner if you have any questions.
What happens during telemetry monitoring?
These are the steps you can expect:

Sticky pads (electrodes) are placed on your chest. If you have hair on your chest, your nurse may need to shave and clean the area to make sure the pads stick to your skin.

5 wires are attached to your chest.

The telemetry unit is programmed to “alarm” or let the nurse know if there are any changes in your heart rhythm. You will not hear the alarm. It can only be heard at the monitoring station.

At times the unit can send an alarm for other reasons, but the nurse may still come to check on you.

Some examples of when the telemetry unit may send an alarm include:

• Repeated moving of the wires, for example when you walk or brush your teeth
• Disconnected wire or electrode
• Low battery
• Being too far from the monitoring station so the nurses can no longer see your heart pictures
What activities are safe for me to do?

- Stay active. Keep walking and moving around if this is OK with your doctor and nurse practitioner. Telemetry should not make you move less or be less active than usual.

- Check in with the nurse:
  - Before you take a shower
  - Before you disconnect the telemetry
  - Before you leave the unit
  - If you have a test and the wires need to be removed
  - If you notice that one of the electrodes has fallen off
  - If you notice that your monitor is beeping

- Put the telemetry unit into the pouch your nurse gave you. Wear this pouch around your neck to protect the telemetry unit and to keep the sticky pads in the right place.
  - If your hospital gown has pockets, you can keep the telemetry unit in the pocket

- For some people, the sticky pads can irritate the skin. Tell your nurse if you are itchy or notice any redness, raised bumpy skin or open skin areas on your chest. We have sticky pads for sensitive skin.

What activities are not safe?

- Don’t leave the unit or your room without letting your nurse know. It is very important that you have the monitor on at all times.

- Don’t take off your telemetry wires or sticky pads.

- Don’t get your telemetry monitor wet.

- Don’t leave your telemetry monitor on the hospital bed wrapped in the bedsheets.
If you leave the unit, we will not be able to check your heart or respond quickly to changes in your heart rhythm.

This could be very dangerous and even life-threatening.

Call your nurse right away if you feel:

- Chest pain
- Discomfort
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Sweatiness
- Shortness of breath
- Fast heartbeat
- Generally feeling sick

What if I want to leave the unit?
If you want to leave the unit and have your telemetry removed, you must talk to your nurse first. The nurse will talk to your doctor to see if it is safe to have your monitor removed.

Who do I call if I have question about my monitor?
If you have questions or concerns, your nurse will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca

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