



Rehearsal Guide

EKG (Electrocardiogram)

Preparing people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) to successfully complete an EKG test

Introduction for Caregivers

A rehearsal guide contains realistic pictures, concrete ideas, and clear, brief instructions for guiding a person through what can be expected in a specific situation. It includes helpful suggestions for caregivers to follow to make the experience meaningful for the person and increase the likelihood of a successful outcome. This approach is beneficial when supporting people with intellectual disability/autism (ID/A) who are anxious about situations such as doctors' appointments, hospitalizations, and medical testing.

A rehearsal guide provides opportunities for the caregiver to assist the person to learn about a specific situation. It contains information on what is needed and why and explains exactly what can be expected. Such a guide is most effective when it is person-centered and used in conjunction with discussion to allow exploration of specific areas of concern. It can be a powerful tool when used as intended.

The expected result is that the person will then experience the situation in a way that supports health and well-being by being prepared and knowing what to expect. The guide can be used at all stages of the situation to facilitate a positive end result.

Thank you for taking the time to use this tool to work with self-advocates to improve their health outcomes.

How to Use This Rehearsal Guide

For best results, begin to review this rehearsal guide with the person prior to the day of the appointment. Sometimes it will help to review this material with an individual several days or weeks before an appointment; other times, it may be better to wait to review this material until just before the procedure is to take place, perhaps the day before or the morning of the procedure. Together with the individual, determine which will best suit the individual's needs and abilities in understanding the information provided; however, it is important not to wait until 5 minutes before a procedure to introduce this guide to an individual. Give the individual enough time in advance to become familiar with the procedure based on the pictures and information contained on each page and with the individual's abilities in mind.

It is best to review this guide slowly and to focus on one idea/page at a time, allowing the person to talk and/or ask questions after each idea/page is presented. A caregiver may want to share personal experiences related to having this procedure done but be sure to do so in a positive manner, depicting a positive outcome.

For Best Practices

- ✓ Allot time to review this material when the individual is alert and interested in doing so.
- ✓ Ensure that the setting is free from distraction. Based on the individual's attention span, it may be best to review one page at a time, rather than reviewing an entire guide in one sitting.
- ✓ Explain each picture and practice the suggested exercises with the individual, such as deep breathing, as they appear throughout the guide.
- ✓ On the day of the procedure, take this guide along to continue rehearsing the various steps involved in the procedure. Review each page step by step.
- ✓ Remain positive, calm, and upbeat.
- ✓ Remember to offer positive reinforcement throughout the procedure. If the procedure is not able to be completed, focus on positive aspects. If the individual seems upset, talk about it later when they are calm to find out how they felt and what could be changed or improved to have a better outcome the next time.

Introducing the Process

[\(Name of individual\)](#), you are going to have an EKG done on [\(insert date here\)](#).

The EKG is a test to check your heart. The doctor ordered this test to help keep you healthy.

[\(Name of caregiver\)](#) will go with you and stay with you while you have the EKG completed.

This test will take place at [\(name of location\)](#).



Getting Ready for an EKG

The doctor may tell you to wear comfortable clothing for this test.

You can wear a shirt that is easy to take off and put back on.

Someone will help you undress if you need it.

It may be best not to wear jewelry to the test. If you do, ask [*\(Name of caregiver\)*](#) to hold it for you during the test.



Getting Ready for an EKG



The doctor may also tell you **not** to drink anything cold and **not** to exercise before you have the EKG done.

The doctor may also tell you **not** to put on any lotions, oils or powders on your skin that day.

Be sure to do everything the doctor tells you to get ready for the EKG.

Note to Caregiver: You may want to contact the doctor's office before the EKG to find out if there are any pre-test instructions.

In the Waiting Room

When you first get to your appointment, you will have to wait until someone calls your name to have the EKG done.

(Name of caregiver) will stay in the waiting room with you.

Would you like to take a favorite book along to read or some of your favorite music to listen to on your headset while you wait?



In the Waiting Room

(Men do not usually need to wear a gown during this test.)

There will be people at this place who will tell you what you need to do. They are there to help you.

You will need to take off your shirt for the EKG test. These people will give you a patient gown to put on. You will be able to put your clothing in the changing room.

(Name of caregiver) will be right there with you to assist you.



Note to Caregiver: You may want to reassure the individual that the dressing room is private.

The Room You Will be in

This is what the room you will be in may look like.

It will have a bed for you to lie down during the test.

The EKG machine will be near the bed.

The person who will do the EKG on you is called a technician and he or she will be in the room too.



Before the Test

The technician will help you lay down on the bed.

Try to relax when you lay down.

The EKG test does not hurt.

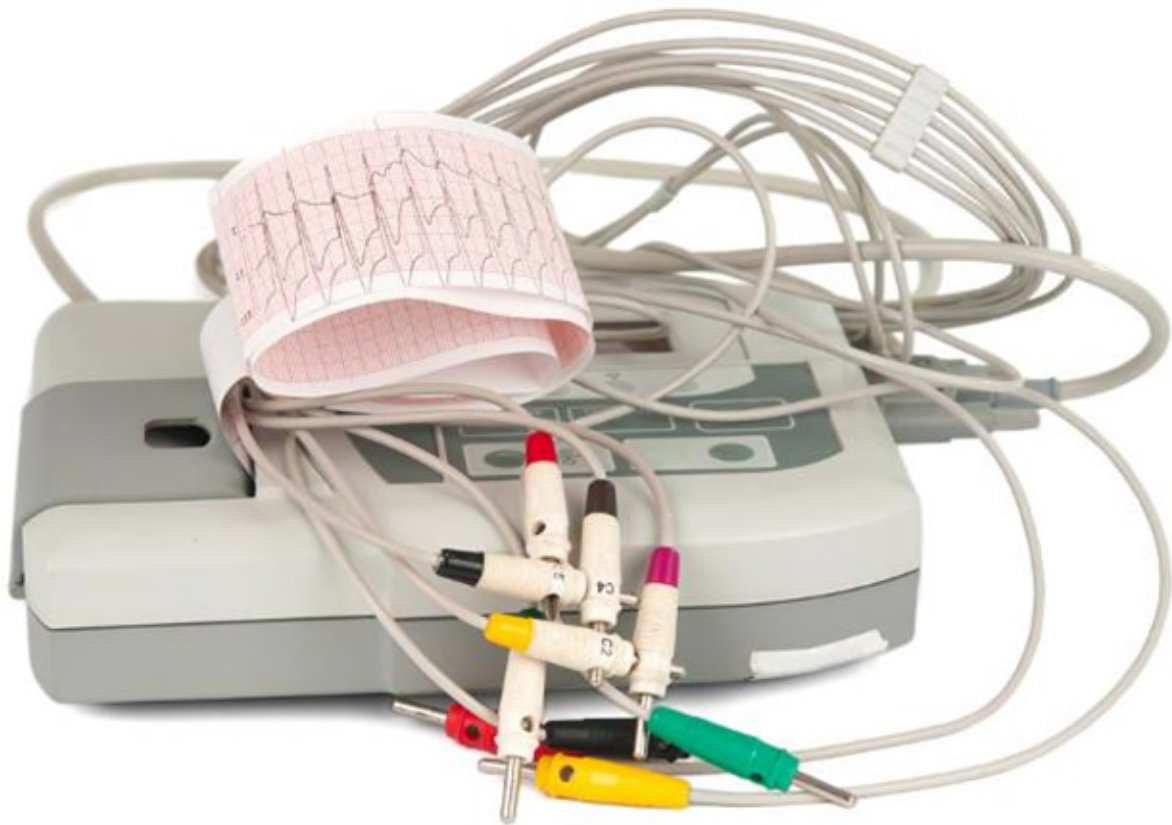


The EKG Machine

This is what the EKG machine looks like.

Some EKG machines may be a little bigger.

It has a lot of wires connected to it called electrodes.



The Electrodes



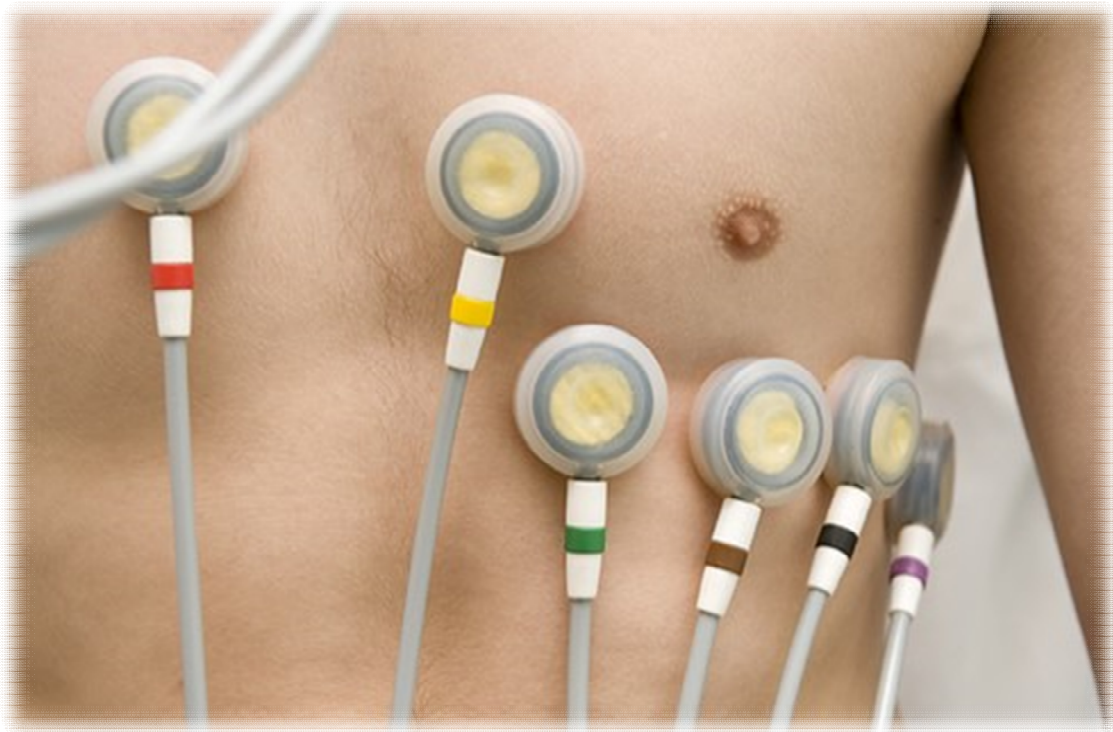
These are electrodes.

They are small sticky patches that will be put on your skin during the EKG. They are like stickers. They can come in different colors, shapes, and sizes.

The technician will stick wires to these electrodes to watch your heart. You won't feel these wires at all.

Note to Caregiver: *If possible, place plastic stickers on the person's arms to show how the electrodes will feel and to assure him/her they do not hurt.*

Preparing a Male for the Test



The technician will put the electrodes (small sticky patches) on your chest, and maybe your arms and legs. The technician might wipe those areas clean so the electrodes (patches) will stick better.

This won't hurt at all.

If you have a hairy chest, the technician might need to shave small areas so the patches will stick to your chest. This will not hurt either.

If possible, [*\(Name of caregiver\)*](#) will be in the room with you so that you won't be alone.

Preparing a Female for the Test



The technician will put the electrodes (small sticky patches) on your chest and maybe your arms and legs. The technician might wipe those areas clean so the electrodes (patches) will stick better.

This won't hurt at all.

If possible, [*\(Name of caregiver\)*](#) will be in the room with you so that you will not be alone.

The EKG Test



The technician will turn on the EKG machine and start the test. The EKG does not hurt at all, and you won't feel a thing.

It is very important to stay as still as you can so the machine can check your heart.

The technician will tell you when it is okay for you to move again.

Breathing Exercise (as needed)

Sometimes you may need to hold your breath so the test goes well. The technician may ask you to hold your breath for just a short time during the EKG.

Let's practice holding our breath.



Note to Caregiver: Practice holding your breath with the individual. Encourage the individual to hold his/her breath with you when the time comes during the exam.

All Done!

After the test is done the technician will take the sticky patches and wires off your skin and you can put your shirt back on.

It's that simple!

I know you can do it! You always do a great job!



Note to Caregiver: This is a good place to determine how well the person understood what was presented. Ask some very brief questions such as, “Do you know what will happen when you go to have the EKG done?” Revisit the story as often as needed to ensure the person understands and is prepared when the day of the test arrives.

References

- Family Doctor.org. (2022, July 22). *Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG)*. Retrieved August 05, 2022, from <https://familydoctor.org/electrocardiogram-ekg-ecg/>
- Moores, D. (2022, February 28). *Electrocardiogram*. Retrieved August 05, 2022, from Healthline at <https://www.healthline.com/health/electrocardiogram>



For additional information regarding this guide or any of our physical or behavioral health trainings, contact:

**Kepro SW PA Health Care Quality Unit
(Kepro HCQU)**