

## Department of Cardiac Services

# Contrast Echocardiogram

### What is it?

- An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test does not use radiation.
- During a contrast echo, a contrast agent, which is a small amount of dye containing bubbles, is used to improve the quality of the images being recorded.

### Why is it being done?

- If your doctor has decided that you need an echocardiogram, but the picture quality is not very clear, a contrast agent can be used to help improve the images.

### What does it involve?

- You will be taken into a room. The person performing the test is called a sonographer, who may be male or female. The sonographer may sometimes be a doctor.
- You will be asked to undress to the waist and will be offered a hospital gown that should be left open to the front. You will be asked to lie on a couch and ECG stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the echocardiogram machine. This will monitor your heart rhythm during the test
- If you require a gender specific sonographer/doctor and/or a chaperone, then please inform a staff member before the test begins. Your request will be accommodated accordingly.
- You are entitled to bring an adult friend or adult relative of your choice into the echo room or alternatively, our department will provide a chaperone for you.

## Patient Information

- Verbal consent will be obtained from you to make sure you are happy to proceed.
- You will have a small plastic tube (cannula) inserted into one of the veins in your arm. This will be used later for the injection of the contrast dye. You will then be asked to lie onto your left hand side. If you are unable to lie on your left side, we can carry out the echo while you are lying on your back. The test is carried out in a semi-darkness so the lights will be dimmed once you are comfortable.
- An ultrasound probe (like a small microphone) covered by a small amount of gel is placed gently on your chest in different areas. This provides images of your heart from different angles which are then recorded.
- If you have already had an echocardiogram, we will go straight onto the contrast study. If not, a number of pictures of the heart will be recorded from different areas of your chest first.
- Once the baseline study has been completed, we will go on to the contrast study. The contrast is made up in a syringe which is injected into the vein through the cannula. We will then record pictures.
- The test will take about 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

### **Are there any special precautions that I need to take before or after the echocardiogram?**

- No. You can take all your medication as normal. You can eat and drink as normal. We advise that you stay hydrated (have plenty to drink) and keep yourself warm before the test. This increases the chance that we can access a vein for the cannula insertion during the test.
- You can drive a vehicle after the test has completed.
- If you are pregnant or if there is a chance that you could be, then please notify the department before you attend for this test.
- If you are currently breastfeeding then this can be resumed 3 hours after the test has been completed.

## Patient Information

- Please note that there are no childcare facilities in the department and any child that you choose to bring with you to this appointment remains your responsibility.

## At the end of your echocardiogram

- Once the echocardiogram is complete you can get dressed and leave. There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan, for example, you may drive.
- Detailed measurements are carried out by the sonographer and doctor analysing your scan. These are best performed after the scan is completed. Results are sent to your referring consultant. This is why the result cannot be provided to you when you come for the scan.

## Are there any risks in having the Contrast Echo?

- There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction to the contrast agent used.

**If you have had allergic reactions to any medicines before, please inform us before starting the test.**

## Interpreting & Translation Service

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact us and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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