

Department of Cardiac Services

Echocardiogram

What is it?

- An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart.
- The test is painless and without side effects. It does not use radiation.

Why is it being done?

- An echocardiogram is a very useful test that gives your doctor information about the pumping chambers, valves and structures within the heart. It is not able to tell your doctor whether you have angina.

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 put on a gown that should be left open to the front. You will be asked to lie on a couch on 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.
- 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.
- Verbal consent will be obtained from you to make sure you are happy to proceed.
- Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the machine. These will be used to monitor your heart beat during the test.
- An ultrasound probe (like a small microphone) covered by a small amount of gel is placed gently on the centre of your chest and will be moved to different positions – in the middle of the chest, beneath the left breast, beneath the rib cage and to the base of your neck. This provides images of your heart from a number of different angles which are then recorded. The test is carried out in a semi-darkness so the lights will be dimmed once you are comfortable
- During the echocardiogram you will hear sounds coming from the machine, which represent blood flow through the heart.
- The echocardiogram can take about 30-40 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.
- You can drive a vehicle after the test has completed..
- Please note that there are no childcare facilities in the department and that 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.

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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