

Severe Valve Programme Exercise Stress Echocardiogram

What is a stress echo?

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a painless scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. A stress echo involves making the heart work harder, either with physical exercise or using medication, and taking echo pictures to look at how the function of the heart changes during stress.

You will be taken into the echo room and asked to remove your top clothing and put on a hospital gown. Stickers will be attached to your chest to monitor your heart rate and rhythm. Your blood pressure will also be measured at intervals during the test. You may need to have a cannula (drip) inserted into a vein in your arm.

You will be asked to sit on a reclining bike with straps around your waist and your feet to hold you securely. The physiologist will take some baseline pictures of your heart using an ultrasound probe with some cool gel on your chest. The exercise bike is tilted over to the left hand side (this improves the echo image quality). It may also be necessary to use an intravenous contrast agent, (a substance which helps us obtain clear pictures of the heart.) During the scan, the room will be darkened so that the echo pictures can be seen more clearly.

After the initial set of pictures has been taken, the bike will then be returned to the upright position and we will ask you to start pedalling. During the test you will need to cycle steadily (usually for 5 - 10 minutes gradually increasing the workload) so that your heart can be scanned while your heart rate increases to a pre-defined target. You will be encouraged to make a good effort to reach the predicted heart rate and so get a good result.

During exercise the bike will be tilted over again so more pictures of the heart can be taken while you continue to pedal, then again returned to the upright position. Up to 4 sets of echo pictures are taken during the test.

When you have done enough exercise and all the required pictures have been obtained you will be told to stop pedalling. You will then be monitored until your heart rate has returned to normal. The cannula and all monitoring equipment will be removed.

If the doctor is available, he will tell you the result. Otherwise, it will be sent to you and your GP shortly after the test.

Why would I need this procedure?

Stress echocardiography is often used for the investigation of possible angina (chest pain due to coronary heart disease), looking to see whether there is an adequate supply of blood to the heart muscle at rest and during stress. The test helps your doctor make the diagnosis, and decide what treatment or intervention is required. It can also be used to assess certain heart valve problems.

What are the symptoms that have led to me having this procedure?

You may have experienced chest pains, breathlessness or have problems with your heart valves.

What are the alternatives?

Other imaging investigations are available for example: CT, MRI or nuclear imaging but your doctor has decided that this test is appropriate for you

What are the potential risks and side effects?

The Exercise Stress echo scan is extremely safe and is just as if you were exercising at home.

There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction to the contrast agent (if used). If you are allergic to any medicines, please inform the doctor before the test begins.

If you suffer from angina, there is a very small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) you may have a small heart attack during the test..

What are the expected benefits of treatment?

This is a diagnostic test not a treatment but the information obtained will help your doctor plan your future treatment.

What should I do before I come into hospital?

You should continue all your medications as usual.

Please wear comfortable, flat, secure-fitting shoes on the day of the test.

Where will the procedure take place?

The procedure is performed in the Cardiology Department which is on Level 2 of the Medical Block, opposite Berwick ward. In attendance will be a doctor, 1 or 2 cardiac physiologists and a nurse.

How long will I be in hospital?

After the test you will be asked to sit in the waiting room for 15 minutes to make sure you have fully recovered. You can then go home.

Consent

Although you consent for this treatment, you may at any time after that withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your medical team.

Who to contact

Cardiology Department – Tel: (01323) 413801

Important Information

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. It is not definitive. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that it is always subject to change. Please, therefore, always check specific advice on the procedure or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

Hand Hygiene

In the interests of our patients the trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is a very important factor in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available throughout our hospitals at the patient bedside for staff to use and also at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

This information is available in alternative formats such as large print or electronically on request. Interpreters can also be booked. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offices, found in the main reception areas:

Conquest Hospital

Email: **esh-tr.palsh@nhs.uk** - Telephone: **01424 758090**

Eastbourne District General Hospital

Email: **esh-tr.palse@nhs.uk** - Telephone: **01323 435886**

If you require interpreting services during your hospital visit please ask a member of staff who will be able to organise this for you via the appropriate department.

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

Written by - Lesley Hart: Highly Specialist Clinical Physiologist.

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information - Dr Andrew Marshall: Consultant Cardiologist.

The directorate group that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

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Responsible clinician/author: Lesley Hart: Highly Specialist Clinical Physiologist

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