

Patient information

Echocardiogram

What is an echocardiogram and why might I need this?

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to produce pictures of your heart. It's a test that doesn't have any side effects and doesn't use radioactivity it can be slightly uncomfortable but does not have any medical risks. An echocardiogram tells us how well your heart is pumping and whether your heart valves are working properly, but it doesn't indicate whether or not you have angina.

Preparing for the echocardiogram

You can take all your medications as usual and eat and drink as normal. We do not routinely provide a chaperone but one will be available at your request. You can request whether you wish a female physiologist to perform the echo by contacting the cardiology department prior to the appointment (see appointment letter contact information). The test will take approximately 30 minutes.

If you arrive late for this appointment, regretfully your test will have to be cancelled, so please allow extra time for travelling and parking.

At the appointment

The test will be performed by a Physiologist, who may be male or female. The physiologist is a qualified specialist who operates ultrasound equipment and usually not a doctor, which means unfortunately any questions you may have about your results will need to wait until you see a specialist doctor in clinic.

The physiologist may want to check your height, weight and blood pressure as part of the test. **You will be asked to undress to the waist**, but you'll be covered up appropriately. You'll need to lie on the couch on your left hand side. We'll attach stickers to you, which will be connected to the machine, and these will monitor your heart rate during the test. The lights in the room will be dimmed to make it easier for the physiologist to see the images of your heart. An ultrasound probe covered by a small amount of gel is placed on your chest and will be moved to different positions throughout the test. This enables us to see images of your heart from a number of different angles, which are then recorded. During the echocardiogram you will hear sounds coming from the machine, which represent blood flow through the heart.

The echocardiogram will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Once the echocardiogram is complete you can get dressed and leave. There aren't any limitations as to what you can do after the scan so you can resume your normal activities. You can drive to and from your appointment. Your results will be sent to the Doctor who requested this test who will be in touch with you.

Consent

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

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net.

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

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

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Julie Lovell – Principal Cardiac Physiologist

The directorate group that has agreed this patient information leaflet: Medicine

Next review date: January 2027
Responsible clinician/author: Julie Lovell – Principal Cardiac Physiologist

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