

Echocardiogram

Information for patients, parents and guardians

This leaflet provides information about your child's forthcoming appointment so that you know exactly what to expect and can help prepare your child. We'll go into more detail during the appointment and you'll both be able to ask any questions that you may have.

Having an echocardiogram

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to produce pictures of the heart. It's a completely painless test that doesn't have any side effects and doesn't use radioactivity. An echocardiogram tells us how well your child's heart is pumping and whether their heart valves are working properly.

Preparing for your test

Your child should continue to take all of their usual medications and eat and drink as normal.

At the appointment

The test will be performed by a sonographer. A sonographer is a qualified specialist who operates the ultrasound equipment and is usually not a doctor, which means any questions you may have about the results will have to wait until you see your child's specialist doctor in clinic. The sonographer will talk to your child throughout the scan to let them know what they're doing.

We'll ask your child to undress to the waist, but we'll ensure they're covered up appropriately with a hospital gown. They'll need to lie on the couch on their left hand side. We'll then attach stickers (called electrodes) to their chest, which will be connected to the machine, and these will monitor their heart rate during the test. The lights in the room will be dimmed to make it easier for the sonographer to see the images of the heart.

An ultrasound probe covered by a small amount of gel is placed gently on the centre of their chest and will be moved to different positions throughout the test – beneath the left breast, beneath the rib cage and to the base of their neck. This enables us to see images of their heart from a number of different angles, which are then recorded.

During the echocardiogram you'll hear sounds coming from the machine, which represent blood flow through the heart. The echocardiogram will take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete.

Once the echocardiogram is complete your child can get dressed and you will be free to leave. There are no limitations as to what they can do after the scan, so they can carry on as normal.

The results

We'll send the results to the doctor who requested the test, which may be your child's GP or a hospital consultant. You may be given the results of this test during your child's next clinic appointment with their hospital consultant. Alternatively the results may be sent back directly to your child's GP. If you are unsure please ask during your appointment.

Further information

If you need help getting to the appointment please contact your GP surgery so they can arrange hospital transportation for you both.

If you would like further information please contact the non-invasive cardiology department on **023 8120 6404**. Alternatively you can visit our website at www.uhs.nhs.uk and search for '**non-invasive cardiology**'.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital