

Patient information factsheet

Contrast echocardiogram

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

Having a contrast echocardiogram

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to produce pictures of your heart. You may have already had a standard echocardiogram. You may have been asked to have this test if a standard echocardiogram did not show very clear pictures of your heart. A contrast echocardiogram is a specific type of echocardiogram which uses a special dye that is injected into one of the veins in your arms. The dye helps us to see your heart more clearly.

Preparing for your test

You can take all your medications as usual and eat and drink as normal. If you would like to bring somebody with you, you're welcome to bring a friend or relative. Alternatively, we can provide a chaperone (somebody to accompany you during the test) upon your request.

At the appointment

The test will be performed by a doctor, who may be male or female.

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 your chest, which will be connected to the machine, and these are used to monitor your heart rate during the test.

A small tube called a cannula will be inserted into one of the veins in your arm. We will use this to inject the special dye (known as contrast) which allows us to see your heart more clearly. The contrast is very safe. The contrast is only used in ultrasound. It is not the same contrast used in CT or MRI scans and will not affect your kidneys.

In rare circumstances (1 in 1000), some people may experience an adverse reaction to the contrast (SonoVue). This includes a hypersensitivity reaction, such as:

- reddening or swelling of the skin
- hives
- swelling of the face, hands, feet or ankles
- low blood pressure
- fall in the heart rate

Please let us know before the test if you have any known pre-existing allergies. If you are allergic to the sulphite component in red wine, sulphonamide antibiotics or sulphur-containing products, we will not give you SonoVue.

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

During the scan you will hear sounds coming from the machine, which represent blood flow through the heart. The echocardiogram will take up to approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Once the scan is complete you can get dressed and leave. There are no limitations as to what you can do after the scan. You may drive to and from your appointment.

Your results

The doctor may be able to discuss the results with you on the day of your appointment. Alternatively your results will be sent back to the doctor who requested the test, which may be your GP or hospital consultant. If this is a hospital consultant you may be given the results of this test during your next clinic appointment. If you are unsure please ask during your appointment.

Further information

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

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 audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.