

Patient information factsheet

Adult congenital heart service: bubble saline contrast echocardiogram

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about a bubble saline contrast echocardiogram. It explains what a bubble saline contrast echocardiogram is and what the procedure involves. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us.

What is a bubble saline contrast echocardiogram?

A bubble saline contrast echocardiogram is a test often performed as part of a patent foramen ovale (PFO) clinic review.

A PFO is a normal flap valve opening that occurs in the wall (atrial septum) of the heart. It separates the right atrium from the left atrium (the top two heart chambers) while in the womb, but usually closes spontaneously (naturally) after you are born. However, in a quarter of people it stays open and can intermittently allow blood flow to pass from the right atrium to the left atrium.

Before the procedure

You should:

- take all your normal medication (if you have a repeat prescription of your medications, please bring it with you)
- eat and drink as normal

On the day of the procedure

Please report to the non-invasive cardiology reception as detailed in your appointment letter. We will direct you to a waiting area before calling you through for your test. You will meet your sonographer (ultrasound/scan specialist) and doctor who will explain the test in more detail to ensure any further questions you may have are answered.

The procedure

We will supply you with a hospital gown, and ask you to undress to the waist and then to lie on a couch. The doctor or sonographer will insert a thin, plastic tube (a cannula) into a vein in your left arm.

You may have already had an echocardiogram performed. This is a safe, non-invasive procedure that uses ultrasound waves to see the heart. A bubble saline contrast echocardiogram is similar, but during this procedure, we will mix a small sample of your blood with a saline solution (sterile salty water) and inject this through the thin plastic tube in your arm. We will repeat the injections several times. We may ask you to hold your breath for a few seconds during the procedure. The whole procedure will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

This procedure gives much clearer images of the heart, as the saline solution helps enhance the quality of the pictures.

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These images will be recorded on the machine and reviewed by your doctor.

After the procedure

After the procedure, your doctor will discuss your results with you.

Possible complications

The procedure is very safe and complications are rare. You do not have to take any precautions after the test and driving is permitted afterwards.

We may also perform this procedure if you have:

- extra communications (small holes) between blood vessels in your lungs (known as pulmonary arterio-venous malformations)
- a history of complex heart surgery

Contact us

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact us.

Adult congenital heart clinical nurse specialists

Telephone: **023 8120 4739**

Hospital switchboard

Telephone: **023 8077 7222** then ask for **bleep 1481**

Email: **ACHDliaisonteam@uhs.nhs.uk**

Contact details for the department can be found on your appointment letter.

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/congenital-heart-disease

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**