

Stress echocardiogram

Information for teenagers and young adults

We have given you this factsheet because your doctor has referred you for a test called a stress echocardiogram. It explains what this test is and what will happen during the test, so you know what to expect. We hope it will help to answer some of your questions. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is an echocardiogram?

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a test that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce images of the heart and nearby blood vessels. The test involves having a small device called a probe that is covered in gel gently moved across the skin on your chest.



What is a stress echocardiogram?

A stress echocardiogram is a type of echocardiogram that is done while your heart is under stress (working a bit harder than normal) to see how it responds.



Why do I need this test?

A stress echocardiogram can help diagnose and monitor certain heart conditions by checking the structure of the heart and assessing the pumping chambers of the heart while under stress.

Is this test suitable for everyone?

A stress echocardiogram is suitable for everyone. However, it is important that you contact us as soon as you receive your appointment letter if you are pregnant or think you could be pregnant. We may need to postpone your test.

If you have any concerns about the test, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

How should I prepare for the test?

Eating and drinking

Do not have any fluids containing caffeine (such as tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks) on the day of your test. You can continue to have other fluids, like water, until your test starts.

Do not eat a large meal in the **four hours** before your test. However, you can continue to have snacks, if you wish.



Nicotine

Do not smoke or vape before your test.



Medications

Bring a list of the medications you are currently taking with you to your appointment.

Stop taking the following medications **48 hours** before your test:

- Bisoprolol
- Atenolol
- Metoprolol
- Carvedilol
- Propranolol
- Nadolol

For example, if your test is on a Thursday, you should stop taking these medications on the Tuesday.

You can continue to take all your other medications as normal.

If you develop new or worsening symptoms after stopping taking any of the medications listed above, please contact your general practitioner (GP) or NHS **111** for further advice.



Clothing

Wear loose clothes (ideally shorts or trousers) and suitable shoes for doing exercise (for example, trainers).



Getting to the hospital

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



What will happen before the test?

The test will be performed by a cardiologist (a heart doctor) or a sonographer (a specialist healthcare professional who operates ultrasound equipment). They will also be assisted by a cardiac physiologist (a highly trained medical scientist who studies how the heart works) or a nurse.

Before the test, we will:

- explain the test to you and answer any questions you may have.
- ask you if you are happy to go ahead with the test.
- ask you to remove your clothes from your waist up (you can keep your shorts or trousers on) and change into a hospital gown that opens at the front.
- attach some small stickers (called electrodes) to your chest. These stickers will be connected to a machine which will allow us to monitor your heart rate and blood pressure throughout the test.

Your parent or guardian can stay with you for the whole test, if you wish.

What will happen during the test?

We will:

- ask you to lie down on a special couch that has bicycle pedals at one end.
- do a resting echocardiogram (a scan of your heart while you are at rest).
- ask you to pedal while you are lying down. We will start you off at a gentle rate and then gradually increase the workload. We will encourage you to pedal for as long as you can (there is no set time you must pedal for and you can stop when you need to).
- repeat the echocardiogram when your heart rate reaches the desired level with exercise.
- gently remove the stickers from your chest at the end of the test.

Are there any risks?

A stress echocardiogram is a painless and safe procedure. It is important that you do your best during the test, but you should not push yourself too hard that you become unwell.

We may stop the test early if you experience:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- weakness
- nausea (feel sick) or dizziness
- leg discomfort
- significant changes in your blood pressure or heart rate

How long will the test take?

The exercise part of the test will only take a few minutes, but please allow around 45 minutes for the whole test.

What will happen after the test?

After the test, we will ask you to rest in the waiting area for 20 to 30 minutes to allow your blood pressure and heart rate to return to their resting levels. As soon as you feel well enough, you will then be able to leave hospital and return to your normal daily activities.

When will I receive my results?

The cardiologist or sonographer will let you know the results and explain what they mean straightaway. We will also send a copy of your test results to the doctor who referred you for the test and a copy to your GP. They may wish to discuss the results with you at a later date.

Contact us

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

Non-invasive cardiology team

Telephone: **023 8120 6404** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm)



Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/blood-heart-and-circulation/non-invasive-cardiology

www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/echocardiogram

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

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