

Patient information factsheet

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 an echocardiogram

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to produce pictures of your 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 heart is pumping and whether your heart valves are working properly, but it doesn't tell us whether or not you have angina.

Preparing for your test

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

At the appointment

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

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 will monitor your 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 your heart.

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 echocardiogram you will hear sounds coming from the machine, which represent blood flow through the heart. The echocardiogram will take approximately 30 to 40 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 carry on as normal. You can drive to and from your appointment.

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Your results

Your results will be sent to the doctor who requested the test, which may be your GP or a hospital consultant. You may be given the results of this test during your next clinic appointment with your hospital consultant. Alternatively the results may be sent back directly to your GP. 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'**.

For a translation of this document, or a version in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

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