

Patient information factsheet

Patent foramen ovale (PFO) clinic

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.

Attending your appointment

You have been referred to the patent foramen ovale (PFO) clinic. A patent foramen ovale (PFO) is a small hole between the top two chambers of your heart. Usually this small hole closes on its own soon after birth, but in around a quarter of people it stays open.

There are a number of reasons why you may have been referred for this clinic, which may include one of the following:

- if you are suspected to have a PFO
- for a review of a known PFO
- for review before or after the closure of a PFO
- if you have or are suspected to have small holes between blood vessels in your lungs
- if you have a history of complex heart surgery

Preparing for your appointment

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 your test) upon your request.

At the appointment

A doctor will be present for this appointment, with the assistance of a nurse and a sonographer. A sonographer is a qualified specialist who operates ultrasound equipment. We will talk to you about the reason you have been brought in for the appointment.

We may perform an echocardiogram as part of this appointment. An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to produce pictures of your heart. You may have already had an echo scan of your heart, but we may repeat it.

We may perform a special type of echocardiogram called a bubble saline echocardiogram. During this procedure we will put a small tube called a cannula into one of the veins in your arms. We will use this to inject a solution of harmless bubble saline solution into your veins. A small sample of your blood will be mixed with a saline solution (sterile salty water) and injected through the thin plastic tube in your arm. This solution can help us assess a potential PFO. You may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds during the test. The injections will be repeated several times and the whole procedure will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

There are no limitations as to what you can do after this appointment. You may drive to and from your appointment.

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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.