

Echocardiogram patient information

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 test that is relatively pain free (discomfort can sometimes be felt when the probe is on the skin), doesn't have any side effects and doesn't use radiation.

An echocardiogram shows lots of information about how well your heart is pumping and whether your heart valves are working properly. It cannot diagnose all heart problems and so is used in combination with other tests to build a picture of how your heart is functioning.

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. You will be required to undress the top half of your body to allow images to be taken but a gown can be provided to maintain dignity where needed, so please wear loose fitting, easily removed clothing.

At the appointment

The test will be performed by a sonographer, who will be male. If this is a problem then please discuss with the admin team as soon as possible. The sonographer is a qualified specialist who operates ultrasound equipment and is not a doctor, which means that any questions you may have about your results may have to wait until you see your GP or a specialist in clinic. You will be asked to undress to the waist and to lie on a couch in various positions during the scan. You will have ECG stickers placed on your shoulders/hip, which 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 in different positions throughout the test – on the centre of the chest, on the left side of the rib cage (under the 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 20 to 30 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. You will be informed if there is anything of immediate concern before leaving.

After the test

Once the test is complete and all paperwork and invoicing complete you will be free to leave. The test will be reported promptly and results forwarded securely to the doctor who referred you for the test. They shall be given the full report and any pertinent information discussed on the day of your appointment. They will also receive a traffic light indicator as to the urgency of the results and if any action needs to be taken as below.

Green - No referral recommended from test results

Amber - Cardiology referral recommended

Red - Urgent referral advised.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. If you have any concerns or questions related to this test then please contact the administration team at admin@heartandrhythmdiagnostics.co.uk or by phone on 07432827963