



Patient & Family Guide

2024

Echocardiogram

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Echocardiogram

What is an echocardiogram?

- An echocardiogram is a test to measure the size, shape, movement, and flow of blood through the heart.
- This test is safe and painless.
- Soundwaves (ultrasound) are used to get a picture of the heart which can then be seen on a computer screen.
- The pictures are saved for the cardiologist (a doctor who specializes in diseases of the heart) to review.

How do I get ready for the test?

- You **do not** need to do anything to get ready for this test.

Who will do the test?

- The test will be done by a cardiac (heart) sonographer (ultrasound specialist).

What will happen during the test?

- You will be asked to change from the waist up into a hospital gown. You can wear your own clothes from the waist down during the test.
- Small stickers called electrodes will be placed on your chest. They are connected to the ultrasound machine.
- A small amount of ultrasound jelly will be placed on your chest. This helps to make good contact between your skin and the ultrasound probe.
- The room lights will be lowered so the pictures on the computer screen can be seen easily.
- During the test, the sonographer will move the ultrasound probe around on your chest.
- The sonographer will ask you to lie on your left side.
- They may ask you to breathe in and out slowly, or to hold your breath.
- **You must stay still during the test.** Moving can make it hard for the sonographer to get the right picture.
- If the sonographer is having trouble getting a clear picture of your heart, you may have a needle injected into a vein in your arm with a medication called a contrast agent. This will help make the picture clearer.

How long will the test take?

- The test will take about 45 minutes.

After the test

- You can go back to your usual activities.
- The cardiologist may wish to do more tests or to examine you. They will talk with you about this.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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