



Welcome Sheet

Having an Echocardiogram

What is an Echocardiogram?



An echocardiogram, commonly known as an "echo," is a non-invasive test to evaluate the structure and motion of heart function, heart valves, and blood flow through the heart. Echocardiogram uses ultrasound (high-frequency sound waves) to create an image of your heart on a television screen (monitor). A specially trained cardiac sonographer performs an echocardiogram. This test takes 45-50 minutes to complete.

Note: To date, there are no confirmed adverse effects in humans caused by exposure to diagnostic levels of ultrasound.

Before Your Test

- Bring your doctor's orders.
- Take your regular medications prior to the test.
- Come at least 45 minutes before your scheduled tests to complete the registration process. Bring insurance information.

On the Day of Your Test

Wear a loose-fitting shirt or blouse to the test. You will be asked to undress from the waist up for this procedure. A gown will be provided for your privacy and comfort.

During Your Test

- Once you are comfortably positioned, the sonographer applies electrodes (small pads) to your chest to monitor your heart beat. Then, the sonographer applies gel to your chest area.
- The sonographer places a transducer (a wand-like object) on your chest and takes several images of your heart. You may feel pressure during the test as the sonographer presses down to obtain clear images.
- The cardiologist may recommend use of a contrast agent (injectable liquid) during the test in order to get a better image of your heart.

During Your Test *(continued)*

- The registered nurse (RN) will place an intravenous line (IV) in your hand or arm.
- Different contrast agents may be used. Infrequently, mild side effects may occur such as a headache or a warm sensation in your hand/arm when the contrast agent is injected through the IV.
- **Report any allergies to albumin-based products to your nurse or cardiologist before the test.**
- The sonographer takes additional images of the heart after the contrast agent is injected. The RN removes the IV at the end of the procedure.

After Your Test

- **Return to Your Normal Activities:** You may go home and return to your normal activities after the test.
- **Echo Test Results are Mailed to Your Doctor:** The results are mailed directly to your primary doctor and to your cardiologist (if you have one). Your primary doctor and/or your cardiologist will discuss the results with you.

More Ways to Learn

- Visit the American Heart Association Web site at www.americanheart.org.
- Go to www.ardms.org/products/PatientBrochure.pdf to learn more about ultrasound examinations.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is an echocardiogram?

Answer: An echocardiogram is a non-invasive test to evaluate the structure and motion of heart function, heart valves, and blood flow through the heart.

Question: How long will this test take?

Answer: An echo takes from 45-50 minutes to complete.

Question: Is there any discomfort with this test?

Answer: You may feel some slight pressure with this test. If you have an echocardiogram with contrast you may feel a slight headache or warm sensation in your arm when the contrast agent is injected. **Report any allergies to albumin-based products to the RN or cardiologist before the test.**

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Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).