

Patient information leaflet Echocardiogram

Cardiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about Echocardiogram. Please contact the team if you require further information via the details at the end of this leaflet.

IMPORTANT information ahead of your procedure to consider:

- **HOSPITAL TRANSPORT PATIENTS:** Please ensure you make arrangements with transport on return journey.
- If you are coming on a **STRETCHER**, please contact the department at **01279827337** to arrange a special appointment.
- Children are not allowed in the waiting area unattended. Staff are not permitted to supervise children so please ensure child care arrangements are in place to avoid your appointment being rescheduled.
- Please allow enough time for parking to avoid your appointment being rescheduled. We advise allowing at least 20 minutes before your appointment slot to allow enough time to park your car, as parking is limited. You may want to leave your car in an offsite car park.

What is 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.

Why do I need an echocardiogram?

The scan provides your doctor with specific information about:

- the structure of your heart
- the flow of blood to your heart

This information cannot be detected with an ordinary electrocardiogram (ECG).

Preparing for your procedure

- You do not need to prepare for this scan
- You can eat and drink as normal on the day

Medication

Please continue to take all medications as normal unless told otherwise by your doctor.

Getting to us

The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX), follow the signage to the cardiology reception, which is located on the ground floor, blue zone. Please let the receptionists know that you have arrived for your appointment.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive at the cardiology department approximately 10 minutes prior to your appointment time. Unfortunately, if you are late we may have to reschedule.

The day of the procedure

You will be taken into a room. The person performing the test is called a sonographer/cardiac physiologist, who may be male or female. The sonographer may sometimes be a doctor.

The procedure

- You will be asked to undress to the waist and put on a gown that should be left open to the front. You will be asked to lie on a couch on your left-hand side. If you are unable to lie on your left side, we can carry out the echo while you are lying on your back.
- If you require a gender specific sonographer/doctor and/or a chaperone, then please inform a staff member before the test begins. We will try to accommodate your request, if this is not possible on the day, you may be rescheduled.
- You are entitled to bring an adult friend or adult relative of your choice into the echo room or alternatively, our department will provide a chaperone for you.
- Verbal consent will be obtained from you to make sure you are happy to proceed.
- Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the machine. These will be used to monitor your heart beat during the test
- An ultrasound probe (like a small microphone) covered by a small amount of gel is placed gently on the centre of your chest and will be moved to different positions – in the middle of the chest, beneath the left breast, beneath the rib cage and to the base of your neck. This provides images of your heart from a number of different angles which are then recorded. The test is carried out in semi-darkness so the lights will be dimmed once you are comfortable.
- During the echocardiogram you will hear sounds coming from the machine, which represent blood flow through the heart.
- The echocardiogram can take about 30-40 minutes to complete.

After the procedure

- Once the echocardiogram is complete, you can get dressed and leave. There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan, for example, you may drive.
- Detailed measurements are carried out by the sonographer. These are best performed after the scan is completed. Results are sent to your referring consultant. This is why the result cannot be provided to you when you come for the scan.

Can I drive after my procedure?

You are able to drive as soon as you are discharged from the department.

Can someone stay with me in hospital?

You may have a friend or family member attend with you, but they will be asked to stay in the waiting area while you are having your examination.

How soon can I return to work?

You are able to return to work as soon as discharged from the department.

Results

Your medical team will look at the results. If necessary, they will contact you to arrange a follow-up appointment to discuss your treatment.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions, please contact the cardiology department on:

Telephone: 01279 827337

Office hours: 09:00am-04:30pm

There is an answerphone available outside of these hours. Please leave a message with your name and hospital number and a member of the team will contact you.

Your feedback matters

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team on paht.pals@nhs.net or 01279 827211.

Please contact the communications team on paht.communications@nhs.net or 01279 827926 if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.

