

Patient information leaflet Exercise Echocardiogram

Cardiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about Exercise 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

- You must not take any beta-blockers or calcium-channel blockers 48 hours prior to your stress echo appointment. This means if your test is Wednesday, take your last tablet on Sunday, if your test is Thursday, please take your last tablet on Monday.
- Beta-blocker tablets include **ATENOLOL, PROPRANOLOL, METOPROLOL, LABETALOL, SOTALOL, NEBIVOLOL and BISOPROLOL.**
- Calcium-channel blockers are called **DILTIAZEM and VERAPAMIL.**
- You must also not take **DIGOXIN and IVABRADINE.** These tablets prevent the stress medicine from making the heart work harder. If you continue to take the drugs mentioned, the stress echo will be postponed to a later date.
- **HOSPITAL TRANSPORT PATIENTS:** Please ensure you make arrangements with transport for both arrival to hospital and return.
- 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 exercise echocardiogram?

An Echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan using ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is painless and without side effects. It does not use radioactivity.

An exercise echocardiogram uses exercise to increase your heart rate and to make your heart work harder.

Why do I need an exercise echocardiogram?

An exercise echo is performed as it allows the doctor to understand how the heart copes when it is made to work harder and is useful to diagnose if you have angina or any possible problems with the blood flow to your heart muscle. It can also help your doctor to decide if your heart function will improve after intervention i.e. bypass/ stents.

Preparing for your procedure

You must NOT eat for two hours before the test; you may drink water.

Medication

Please be advised by the important information on the top part of this leaflet. Please take any other prescribed medication as normal that are not stated at the top of this leaflet and bring a list of your current medications with you.

Getting to us

Please come to The Princess Alexandra Hospital (Hamstel Road, Harlow, Essex, CM20 1QX) and 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

There are no other specific requirements on the day of your procedure but please wear two-piece loose-fitting clothing and trainers or similar comfortable flat shoes.

The procedure

- You will be called you into a room and there will usually be a total of two cardiac physiologists performing the test. Please be aware your relative cannot be present during the procedure.
- The test will be explained to you by the physiologist and check that you have stopped the appropriate medications. You will then be asked to remove the top half of your clothing and a gown will be provided where necessary.
- You will be asked to lie on a specialised exercise bike couch and movable parts will be adjusted around you to make you as comfortable as possible. Several electrodes will be placed on your torso and a blood pressure cuff will be attached.
- If a cannula is required, a doctor will be present. This will be used if we require the use of a contrast agent to improve the quality of the images.
- The specialised exercise couch will be tilted back and to the left.
- The physiologist will take baseline images by placing a probe with a small amount of gel onto the skin surface under the left breast and on the front of your chest.
- Baseline ECG and blood pressure will also be taken. If contrast is needed, it will be injected before the images are taken.
- You will then be asked to begin cycling against a set workload, and will be encouraged to maintain a certain level of exercise.
- You will feel your heart rate increase and once your heart has reached a pre-determined rate, peak images will be taken and the exercise will be stopped. Final images will be taken once the heart rate and blood pressure have returned to resting level.
- The test will take approximately 45 minutes. You will only be required to wait after the test if contrast has been used.

After the procedure

- After the scan, if contrast has been given, the cannula will be removed and you will be able to dress and will be asked to remain in the department for up to 30 minutes. If no contrast is used, you do not have to wait.
- You will be able to return home after your test.

Can I drive after my procedure?

Yes, there are no restrictions to driving following this procedure.

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 can return to work following your procedure, there are no restriction.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions, please contact the Cardiology Department on:

Telephone: **01279 827337**

Office hours: **9am-4:30pm Monday-Friday**

There is an answerphone available outside of these hours. Please leave a message 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.