

Patient information leaflet Stress Echocardiogram

Cardiology department

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about Stress 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 a Stress 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. A stress echocardiogram uses medicine to increase your heart rate and to make your heart work harder while your heart is scanned.

Why do I need a Stress Echocardiogram?

A stress echo is performed as it allows the doctor to understand how the heart copes when it is made to work harder.

A stress echo 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 of the important information on the top part of this leaflet. Please take any other prescribed medication as normal that is 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.

The procedure

- You will be called into a darkened room and there will usually be a total of three people in the room with you. This will be the doctor performing the test, a nurse specialist and a cardiac physiologist.
- Please be aware your relative cannot be present during the procedure. The doctor will explain the test to you and ask you to sign a consent form.
- 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 couch and several electrodes will be placed on your torso, a blood pressure cuff will be attached, and the nurse specialist will insert a cannula.
- A drip will be attached to the cannula to allow the infusion of the medicine, you will be informed when the medicine is started.
- The doctor will then inject contrast to ensure good images are obtained. 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. A baseline ECG and baseline blood pressure will also be taken.
- Once the medicine starts, the physiologist will monitor your ECG and blood pressure throughout, and images will be taken at regular intervals. You will feel your heart rate increase and once your heart has reached a pre-determined rate the medicine will be stopped, and final images will be taken.
- The test will take approximately 45 minutes, and you will then be required to wait for 30 minutes after the test. A stress echo is a safe test but there are some risks involved.
- There is a small risk of an allergic reaction, this is rare, but you should inform the doctor if you have any previous allergic reactions to any medicine.
- The medicine may cause your heart to develop an abnormal rhythm in a very small quantity of patients but if this occurs the medicine will be stopped, and a doctor will be present to treat this if necessary.
- Other risks are extremely low, but these can include a bad angina attack or heart attack; the doctor will talk to you about these risks prior to the test.

After the procedure

After the medicine has been stopped, you will be monitored until your heart rate and blood pressure return to the values taken prior to the procedure.

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.

We are not usually able to give you the results straight away because the scan has to be examined and reported by the doctor, however the doctor performing the study may be able to inform you of the results after the test.

Can I drive after my procedure?

You will be able to return home after your test, but it is strongly advised that you do not drive after the test as you may have had some medication which may affect your vision.

You will be informed if you have had this medication, however we still advise you not to drive for the remainder of the day.

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?

We recommend you do not return to work on the day of your procedure.

Contacting the team

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

Telephone: **01279 827337**

Office hours: **9am-430pm 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.