

**Patient
Information**

Echocardiogram (echo)

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about your planned echocardiogram.

What is an echocardiogram?

An echocardiogram (sometimes just called an 'echo') is a non-invasive imaging test using ultrasound to look at your heart. Ultrasound is very high-frequency sound which cannot be heard by the human ear. It is used to gain information regarding the structure and function of the heart muscles, chambers of the heart, the nearby large blood vessels and structures within the heart such as the valves. The test is painless and does not use radioactivity.

What does the echo involve?

- You will be taken into a room with a trained specialist – either a cardiologist or a cardiac physiologist or radiographer (the sonographer).
- You will be asked to undress to the waist and will be offered a hospital gown that should be left open to the front (like a coat). You will be asked to lie on a couch and ECG stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the echo machine. This will monitor your heart rate and rhythm during the test.
- Next you will be asked to lie 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. The test is performed in semi-darkness so the lights will be dimmed once you are comfortable.
- The sonographer will place the echo probe on your chest (this is like a thick blunt pen) and cold lubricating jelly (this helps to get good contact with the skin).
- The sonographer will record a number of pictures of the heart from different areas of your chest.
- The test will take about 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

Reference No.

GHPI1504_03_22

Department

Cardiology

Review due

March 2025

**Patient
Information**

Do I need to take any special precautions before the test?

No, you should take all of your usual medication as normal on the day of the test. You can also eat and drink normally.

Risks, contra-indications and side effects

- The test does not carry any specific risks; ultrasound waves are harmless (they are used on pregnant women).
- There are no limitations to what you can do following the scan, for example you may drive and carry on with your normal activities.

After the procedure

Your results will be sent to the referring doctor. You may not be given much information on the day.

Contact information

If you have any questions about your planned echocardiogram, please contact your consultant's secretary or:

Cardiology Investigations Department

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital
Great Western Road Gloucester
GL1 3NN

Tel: 0300 422 8281

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:30pm

Further information

Patient

Website: www.patient.co.uk/health/echocardiogram

NHS UK

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/echocardiogram

Content reviewed: March 2022