

# Contrast Echocardiogram

An information guide



# Contrast Echocardiogram

Your doctor has decided that you should have a Contrast Echocardiogram

## What is it?

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is painless and does not use radioactivity. During a Contrast Echo a Contrast agent is injected which improves the quality of the images that are being recorded.

## Why is it being done?

If your Doctor has decided that you need an Echocardiogram, but the picture quality is not very good, a contrast agent can be used to help improve the images. A Contrast Echo is also used to help diagnose if you have any holes in the heart.

## What does it involve?

During the scan two or three people will usually be present. The person performing the test is called a Sonographer, who may be male or female. The Sonographer will usually NOT be a doctor. This means that some questions you may have about the result may have to wait until you see your doctor in clinic.

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. The sonographer may also be sitting on the same couch while performing the scan. The lights will be dimmed during the test.

Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the machine. These will be used to monitor your heart rate during the test. A drip will be placed in your arm.

The Sonographer will record a number of pictures of the heart using a handheld probe covered in a small amount of gel (which may be cold). Whilst this is happening, a contrast agent will be injected into the drip to improve the quality of the images. If the Doctor is looking for the presence of a hole in the heart, you may be asked to cough and sniff whilst the images are being recorded.

The echocardiogram will take approximately 30-40 minutes to complete. Delays are possible during busy periods.

**Are there any special precautions that I need to take before the echocardiogram?**

No. You can take all your medication as normal. You can eat and drink as normal.

**At the end of your echocardiogram**

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.

**Are there any risks in having the Contrast Echo?**

There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction to the contrast agent used. **If you have had allergic reactions to any medicines before please inform us before starting the test.**

**If you require any further information please contact the Cardiorespiratory Department on:**

Fairfield General Hospital:- 0161 778 3811

North Manchester Hospital:- 0161 720 2197

The Royal Oldham Hospital:- 0161 627 8512

Rochdale Infirmary:- 01706 517171

**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service**

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**For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897**


**For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service**

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