

Bubble Contrast Echocardiography

Procedure information for patients

Your doctor has recommended a test called a bubble echo.

If your doctor has decided that you need a bubble echocardiogram, it is to assess if there is a possible “hole in the heart”.

Please take some time to read this information sheet and discuss any questions or concerns you may have with a medical professional.

What is an echocardiogram?

Echocardiography (echo) uses ultrasound waves to create detailed images of your heart. Moving images of your heart are used to assess your heart function. There are 4 chambers of the heart and four heart valves which be assessed during the scan.

During a bubble echo, an agitated saline is injected which allows assessment of a possible “hole in the heart”.

You should take all your medications as usual. Please eat and drink as normal.

During the procedure:

First you will be taken into a darkened room. The person performing the test is called a sonographer. **They are usually NOT a doctor and this means that some questions you may have about the result may have to wait until you see the doctor in clinic.** There will be two people in the room to perform the test, one person to take the echo pictures, and one person to administer the agitated saline solution.

You will be asked to undress from the waist up (you will be offered a hospital gown) and to lie on a couch. Several ECG stickers will be placed on your chest and arms so that we can monitor the heart tracing.

You will be asked to lie back slightly onto your left-hand side for the procedure, which takes approximately 40-60 minutes. Let a member of staff know if this may be difficult for you.

An ultrasound probe covered by a small amount of gel is placed on the centre of your chest and will be moved into different positions- 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. This can be uncomfortable.

During the echocardiogram you will hear sounds coming from the machine which represent blood flow through the heart.

A small plastic tube or “cannula” will be placed into a vein. The Sonographer will record a number of pictures of the heart. Whilst this is happening, an agitated saline will be injected into

the cannula. You may be asked to hold your breath, sniff or cough. Please let us know prior to your appointment if any of these will not be possible.

Chaperone

If you require a chaperone, you may bring a friend or relative. Alternatively, the hospital may provide a chaperone at your request.

What happens next?

Once the echocardiogram is complete you can get dressed. We ask you to wait in the waiting room for 10 minutes post test and then you are free to leave. There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan.

Do you need to change your appointment or ask a question?

If you have any questions about your appointment, or need to cancel or change it, please contact the department in advance using the telephone number on your appointment letter.

Public transport and travel information:

Bus details are available from Lothian Buses on 0131 555 6363 or www.lothianbuses.co.uk, Traveline Scotland on 08712002233 or www.travelinescotland.com.

Train details available from the National Enquires on 03457 484 950 or www.nationalrail.co.uk

Patient Transport:

Patient transport will only be made available if you have a medical/clinical need. Please telephone 0300 123 1236 (calls will be charged at local rate) up to 28 days in advance to book. Make sure you have your CHI number when booking. The CHI number can be found on your appointment letter. Hard of hearing or speech impaired please use Text Relay: 18001 0300123 1236 (calls charged at local rates). To cancel patient transport please call 0800 389 1333 (Freephone 24hr answer service).