

## Patient information

# Contrast Echocardiogram

### Cardio-respiratory Department

Your Consultant / Doctor has advised you to have a contrast echocardiogram

#### What is a contrast echocardiogram?

A contrast echocardiogram is an ultrasound scan of your heart with the addition of an injection of a contrast agent into one of the veins in your arm. The contrast agent is a very safe solution containing microbubbles that show up clearly on ultrasound.

#### What are the benefits of having a contrast echocardiogram?

A contrast echo is performed to obtain clearer pictures of your heart if the images have not been of suitable quality on your echocardiogram. Using a contrast agent helps to define the structures of the heart more clearly allowing the physiologist/doctor to make an accurate assessment and help in your management.

#### The aim of having a contrast echocardiogram

The contrast agent allows the blood and chambers of the heart to be seen very clearly. Hence the aim of a contrast echo is usually to allow clear assessment of the size and function of one of the main pumping chambers of the heart called the 'left ventricle' where it has not been seen clearly on a standard echocardiogram. In rarer cases, a contrast echo can be used to look for a blood clot within the left ventricle in patients who have had a heart attack or have reduced pumping function of the left ventricle.

#### What are the risks of having a contrast echocardiogram?

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

You may have slight bruising or tenderness after the cannula is removed

#### Are there any alternative treatments available?

A contrast echocardiogram is the quickest, least invasive and safest way to assess the left ventricle compared with alternatives such as CT, MRI or Radiation (Nuclear) heart scans.

#### Getting ready for your contrast echocardiogram

On the day of your appointment you may eat and drink as normal. Medications may also be taken as you would usually.

Please leave all valuables at home as the department cannot be held responsible for loss or theft to personal property.

### **The day of your contrast echocardiogram**

In order to perform an ultrasound scan on your heart you will be asked to undress from the waist upwards. A gown can be provided for your comfort. A cannula will be placed into a vein in your arm to allow for a small injection of a contrast agent used to better visualise your heart. The technician will position you on the examination couch on your left side in order to obtain the best view of your heart and the lights will be dimmed in the room.

Your heart rate and rhythm will be monitored by placing three electrodes on your chest during the scan. The technician will obtain images of your heart by moving a probe across different parts of your chest and acquiring images using an ultrasound machine. A medic/nurse will be present to administer the contrast agent. You may be asked to change position or to hold your breath during the test, this again is to help visualise your heart adequately.

Several injections of contrast agent may be required. You will feel no discomfort from the injections of agitated Saline.

The test takes approximately 30mins.

### **Going Home**

You may go home as soon as the test is finished. An escort is not required although you may bring one if you prefer.

### **Further Appointments/results**

The results of the test will be forwarded on to your referring doctor. They will contact you via letter or by seeing you in clinic with the results of the test.

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

### **Further information**

**If you have any further questions about your test please feel free to contact the Cardio-respiratory department where a member of the team will be happy to answer any questions.**

**Sue Alderton  
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