

Contrast Echocardiogram

What is a contrast echocardiogram?

A contrast echocardiogram is a transthoracic echocardiogram that involves a small injection of either agitated saline or a contrast agent to better visualise your heart.

The pictures are obtained by placing a jelly covered transducer (a small probe) on various positions of the left side of your chest whilst acquiring information on the ultrasound machine.

For the purpose of a contrast echocardiogram insertion of a small cannula in your arm or the back of your hand is also required for the injection of agitated saline or contrast.

What happens during a contrast echo?

You will be asked to undress from the waist upwards so that we can access your chest for the scan – a gown will be provided for you to wear.

You will then be asked to lie on a couch on your left side. A cannula will be put into your arm to allow us to inject some agitated saline or contrast in order to better visualise your heart.

If your doctor is looking for the presence of a hole in your heart, you may be asked to cough and sniff whilst the images are recorded. Your heart rate will be monitored through three electrodes placed on your upper chest.

The lights in the room will be lowered and a sonographer will gain images of your heart by placing a transducer on different parts of your chest and acquiring images on the ultrasound machine.

Occasionally you may be asked to change position or hold your breath during the scan in order to obtain the best images.

How long does the test take?

The test takes approximately 20 to 30 mins.

Are there any risks of having a 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. There is also a small risk of the cannula site becoming bruised and or irritated.

Why am I having a contrast echo?

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 happens after the test?

When the scan has been completed you are free to go home and the results of the test will be sent to your referring doctor who will then write to you or arrange an appointment to see you in clinic.

Patient Chaperones

Unfortunately for safety reasons we cannot allow a relative or friend to act as a chaperone for a Contrast Echocardiogram however; if facilities and personnel allow, a chaperone may be provided on request.

Please inform our reception staff if you feel you may require a chaperone to accompany you during your procedure.

Further Information

If you have any questions or require any further information about the above procedure, please contact the Lead Cardiac Physiologist on 0151 - 529 - 2700.



If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact:

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