
ECHOCARDIOGRAM

An echocardiogram is an ultrasound scan of the heart. It is sometimes called an 'echo'. Ultrasound consists of high-frequency sound waves that you cannot hear but can be emitted and detected by special machines. The scan can give accurate pictures of the heart muscle, the heart chambers and structures within the heart such as the valves.

What happens during the test?

You will need to undress to the waist (ladies will be given a gown to wear) and lie on the couch – chaperones may be provided if you wish. A transducer or probe is placed on your chest along with ultrasound gel.

A 'live' ultrasound picture of the heart is shown on the screen. This is constantly updated so the scan

shows movement as well as heart structure. The sonographer moves the probe around over the skin surface to obtain views from different angles. The sound of the blood moving through the heart valves is usually heard during the scan.

The test is harmless & painless, taking about 30-45 minutes. You will have to turn on to your left side during the test to allow the sonographer to obtain the best quality images.

You do not need any special preparation before the test. You may eat and drink normally before and after the test. Please continue to take your usual medication.