

Patient information

Author: Cardiac physiology
Produced and designed by the communications team
Issue date Apr 2019 Review date Apr 2022

Version 2
Ref no. PILCOM1732

This information can be provided in a different language or format (e.g. large print, Braille or audio version) on request.

This is a smokefree Trust. Smoking is not allowed in any of our hospital buildings or grounds.

The Trust will not tolerate aggression, intimidation or violence.

Basildon University Hospital
Nethermayne
Basildon, Essex SS16 5NL
01268 524900

Minicom: 01268 593190
www.basildonandthurrock.nhs.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
01268 394440
Email: pals@btuh.nhs.uk

safe
caring
excellent ...together

Transthoracic echocardiogram

The purpose of this leaflet is to inform and prepare you for your test.

You have been referred to the cardiac physiology team for an investigation called an echocardiogram. This leaflet describes the test so that you know what to expect. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

What is a transthoracic echocardiogram?

A transthoracic echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart by moving a small probe across the chest area. An echocardiogram can give your doctor useful information about how well the heart pumps and whether your heart valves are working properly.

What happens before the test?

You should continue to take your normal medications. You can eat and drink as normal. It is advisable that you wear clothing that is simple to remove from the upper part of your body, for example a top and skirt for females rather than a dress.

- What happens during a transthoracic echocardiogram?
- The echo is carried out by a cardiac physiologist within a curtained area in a quiet room.
- You will be asked to remove all clothing from above the waist and a hospital gown will be provided. You will be asked to lie on a couch on your left hand side – this position enables us to get the best pictures

possible. The lights will be dimmed to allow the physiologist to best view the screen.

- The cardiac physiologist will be sitting closely on the couch / bed next to you and will be leaning across you. A gelled probe will be used to obtain pictures from the front of your chest and under your left breast which are then recorded. We will also need to take some pictures from your stomach area and your neck. You may hear heart sounds coming from the machine.
- The gown that covers your chest will need to be moved during the test in order to obtain all the necessary views of the heart but the cardiac physiologist will ensure you keep as covered as possible.
- Most echocardiograms are completed within 30 minutes. The time can vary depending on how easy the pictures are to obtain and the findings.

The cardiac physiologist may be male or female. A chaperone can be arranged for if requested in advance. Please contact the echo booking team on the number provided on your appointment letter. If a chaperone is requested on the day of the test we will do our best to accommodate this but it may result in a delay or rebooking.

Occasionally the echo will be carried out by a specially trained doctor or nurse. As a training department we sometimes have trainees in attendance but your permission will be

sought for them to remain present or participate in your test.

Are there any side effects?

A transthoracic echocardiogram is painless and has no significant side effects. Some patients may experience slight bruising or tenderness where the camera probe presses on the skin but this should resolve within a few days.

At the end of your echocardiogram

Once the echocardiogram is complete you will be asked to dress and leave. There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan, for example, you may drive.

Results

The results from this test will not be given to you directly but will be forwarded to the doctor who requested the test. For any queries regarding results, please contact the relevant referring doctor's secretary.

Further information

If you have any enquiries please call the echo booking team on the number provided on your appointment letter.