

**Patient  
Information**

# Echocardiogram (echo)

## Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about your planned echocardiogram.

## What is an echocardiogram?

An echocardiogram (sometimes just called an 'echo') is a non-invasive imaging test using ultrasound to look at your heart. Ultrasound is very high-frequency sound which cannot be heard by the human ear. It is used to gain information regarding the structure and function of the heart muscles, chambers of the heart, the nearby large blood vessels and structures within the heart such as the valves. The test is painless and does not use radioactivity.

## What does the echo involve?

- You will be taken into a room with a trained specialist – either a cardiologist or a cardiac physiologist or radiographer (the sonographer).
- You will be asked to undress to the waist and will be offered a hospital gown that should be left open to the front (like a coat). You will be asked to lie on a couch and ECG stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the echo machine. This will monitor your heart rate and rhythm during the test.
- Next you will be asked to lie on your left-hand side. If you are unable to lie on your left side, we can carry out the echo while you are lying on your back. The test is performed in semi-darkness so the lights will be dimmed once you are comfortable.
- The sonographer will place the echo probe on your chest (this is like a thick blunt pen) and cold lubricating jelly (this helps to get good contact with the skin).
- The sonographer will record a number of pictures of the heart from different areas of your chest.
- The test will take about 30 to 45 minutes to complete.

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Department

**Cardiology**

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## Do I need to take any special precautions before the test?

No, you should take all of your usual medication as normal on the day of the test. You can also eat and drink normally.

## Risks, contra-indications and side effects

- The test does not carry any specific risks; ultrasound waves are harmless (they are used on pregnant women).
- There are no limitations to what you can do following the scan, for example you may drive and carry on with your normal activities.

## After the procedure

Your results will be sent to the referring doctor. You may not be given much information on the day.

## Contact information

If you have any questions about your planned echocardiogram, please contact your consultant's secretary or:

### Cardiology Investigations Department

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital Great Western Road Gloucester  
GL1 3NN

Tel: 0300 422 8641 or 6551

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:30pm

## Further information

### Patient

Website: [www.patient.co.uk/health/echocardiogram](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/echocardiogram)

### NHS UK

Website: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/echocardiogram](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/echocardiogram)

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## Making a choice

### Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



### Ask 3 Questions

**To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.**

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

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\* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>