

Echocardiogram

What is an Echocardiogram?

An Echocardiogram, also referred to as an “Echo”, creates images of the heart by using high frequency sound waves. An Echo allows your doctor to evaluate your heart muscle, its valves and pericardium (the sac that surrounds the heart) by producing two dimensional “real time” images.



Why did the doctor order this exam for me?

- Cardiomyopathy (enlargement of the heart)
- Congenital (present from birth) heart defects
- Damage from hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart attack damage or scarring
- Pericardial disease (the membrane that surrounds the heart)

What do I need to do to prepare for this exam?

No special preparation is needed for the exam.

What should I expect from this exam?

The sonographer will ask questions regarding your medical history. You will be asked to undress from the waist up and wear a gown for the exam.

Three electrodes (small sticky patches) will be placed on your chest. The electrodes are attached to an electrocardiograph monitor (ECG) that charts your heart’s electrical activity.

A transducer (a hand held device that transmits sound waves) will be passed over several areas of your chest.

Gel will be placed on the transducer to assist in the transmission of clear images of your heart onto a computer screen.

You may be asked to change positions during the exam in order to take pictures of different areas of your heart and to hold your breath at times.

You may feel slight discomfort from the pressure of the transducer on your chest and the coolness from the gel.

The technologist may need to inject an enhancing agent called Definity. Definity is an injectable suspension used to highlight the left ventricular chamber and to improve the delineation of the left ventricular endocardial border. If the technologist feels this is necessary, a nurse will start an IV site for the injection. You will be asked to sign consent for the use of Definity and verify no history of a previous reaction. A charge will be billed to your insurance for this product. Not all patients will need Definity, it is dependent on the image quality of the study.

Please allow 60 minutes for this exam.

Who will perform the exam?

A registered sonographer will perform the exam in the Imaging department.

How will I get the results of the exam?

You will receive your results from your ordering physician. This may take 3-5 days for the office to contact you. Please contact your provider if it has been longer than 5 days.

Contact the Imaging department for any questions prior to your exam, 217-762-1820.