

Echocardiography Patient Information Booklet

During the scan, the sonographer may ask you to breathe in a certain way or to lie on your side. It is necessary to apply even pressure to your chest to achieve the best possible images of your heart. While this is aided by the gel, pressure from the transducer may be a little uncomfortable at times.

An echo usually takes between 30 minutes and one hour, but timing may vary depending on the condition that you've been referred to us for. At the end of the scan, the sonographer will study the information obtained and prepare a worksheet for our cardiologist to report the findings.

WHAT TYPE OF ECHO TESTING DO WE DO?

At SATA we perform transthoracic echo's using Doppler ultrasound technology. A transthoracic echo is a standard, non-invasive ultrasound where the images of your heart are taken through the wall of your chest. Doppler technology measures the speed and direction of your blood flow as it travels through the chambers of your heart. When the Doppler is switched on, you may hear a pulsing 'whoosh' sound - this is the computer's calculation of your blood flow and it helps us to identify any blockages or leaks.

HOW DO I MAKE AN ECHO APPOINTMENT?

Once your doctor has written a referral, simply contact the hotline at 62446688 and make an appt at the medical centre nearest to you. Appointments can generally be made within two weeks of your initial call. If you feel your situation is more urgent, please advise our reception staff and we will help you to book you in sooner (where possible).

HOW DO I GET THE RESULTS?

You will not be provided with your results at the time of your examination. Once your results are finalised, we will send a copy of the report to your doctor. This process will take between one and two weeks and you will need to make an appointment to re-visit with your doctor to discuss the results in detail.

WHAT IS AN ECHOCARDIOGRAM?

An echocardiogram (echo) is an ultrasound of the heart. It's a very common procedure that is safe, painless and appropriate for all ages. Ultrasound uses sound wave technology to create an image of the inside of your body. In the case of an echo, the image we are creating is of the inside of your heart.

Using ultrasound, an echo allows us to view your heart in motion, to measure the efficiency of your blood flow and to view any structural damage or changes within the heart itself. It uses the same technology that allows us to capture images of an unborn child, so an echo can even be used to assess heart defects in your baby.

WHY MAY YOU NEED AN ECHO EXAMINATION?

Echo's are one of the most comprehensive and effective tests available for imaging and assessing conditions of the heart.

Being referred for an echo need not be cause for alarm as there are many reasons why your doctor may request this examination. While every patient is different, common reasons for referral include:

- To quantify (measure) the shape, size and volume of your heart
- To assess your risk for any heart conditions which may be indicated by family history
- To identify the cause of any heart murmurs, chest pain or shortness of breath
- To assess the function of the valves and chambers of your heart to determine its ability to pump blood
- To investigate causes of unexplained fatigue, irregular heartbeats/palpitations or hypertension
- To identify any causes for clot formation, which may lead to stroke
- Ongoing annual screening of an already identified heart condition
- To facilitate pre-surgery planning or post-surgery monitoring

The main structures of your heart:

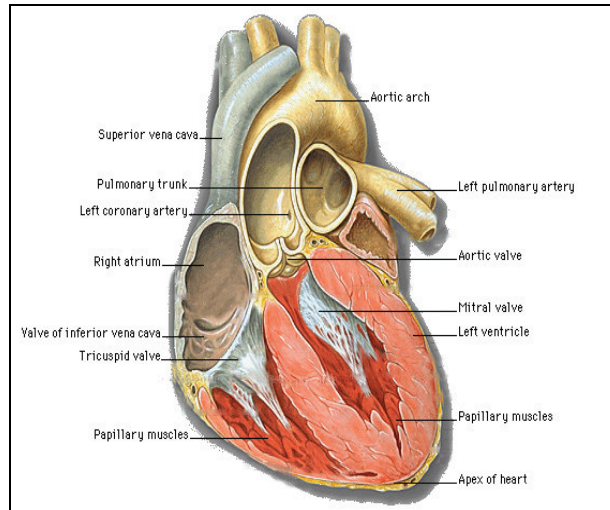


Image Source: http://info.med.yale.edu/intmed/cardio/echo_atlas

Illustrated view of an echo exam:

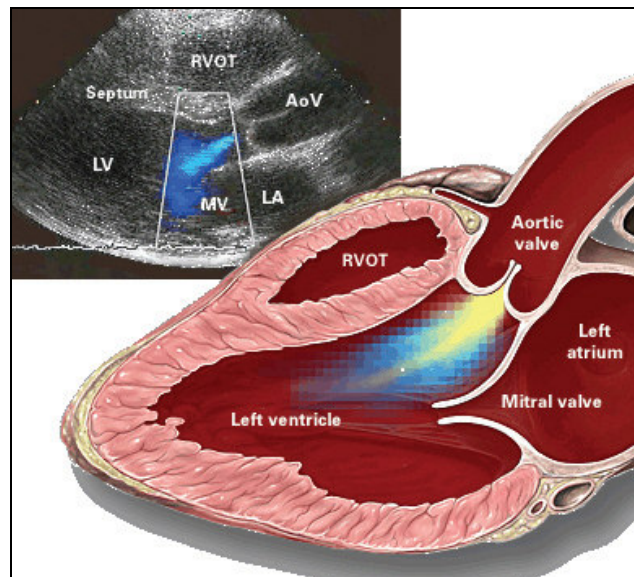


Image Source: http://info.med.yale.edu/intmed/cardio/echo_atlas

HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR AN ECHO?

No special preparations are necessary for an echo. However, you will be required to undress from the waist up so please wear comfortable, loose clothing (we would recommend that you wear a 2-piece outfit). A gown can be provided for your privacy and comfort.

HOW IS AN ECHO PERFORMED?

An echo is like any other ultrasound procedure but the sonographer performing your examination is specially trained in the anatomy (structures) and physiology (how they work) of the heart. At the start of the scan, our sonographer will dim the lights so they can clearly see the images of your heart on their monitor.

They will then spread a layer of gel onto your chest and press a device called a transducer firmly onto your skin. The transducer aims ultrasound beams through your chest and into your heart and the images it creates are displayed on the ultrasound monitor.