Echocardiogram (Echo Test)

Why do I need this test?

An echocardiogram (echo test) is an ultrasound of the heart.

This test uses sound waves to make pictures of the heart. The pictures let us see the heart chambers and how well blood is flowing through the heart. You will not feel the sound waves.

If the pictures are unclear, we may inject a special fluid into your vein. This will help us get better pictures of your heart.

How do I get ready for the test?

You do not need to do anything special to prepare. You may eat, drink and take your normal medicines.

Wear a comfortable two-piece outfit.

Please bring a list of your medicines to the hospital or clinic.

Please do not wear perfumes or scented lotions on the day of your exam.

What happens during this test?

Your exam will take about 30 to 60 minutes. It is painless. We may ask you to hold your breath from time to time.

1. You will lie on your left side.

2. We will rub clear gel onto your chest.

3. We will move a wand back and forth over the gel. (The wand is called a transducer.) You will feel gentle pressure on your chest. Sound waves from the wand will create pictures of your heart on a video screen.

If we put fluid into your vein:

1. We will place an IV (small needle) in your hand or arm.

2. We will inject the fluid through the IV and into your body.

3. We will move the wand over your chest. Pictures of your heart will appear on a video screen.
Why would I receive IV fluid?

Sometimes a doctor will order this fluid to check for specific problems. At other times, we cannot get clear pictures from the echo test. IV fluid will help us get better pictures.

There are different types of IV fluid.

**Salt water (bubble study)**

We may mix salt water until small bubbles form. Then, we will inject the salt water through the IV into your vein. The bubbles will help us track blood flow through the heart.

**Optison or Definity**

These medicines contain tiny gas bubbles. We may inject one of these medicines through your IV and into your vein. When the bubbles reach your heart, they will reflect sound waves from the echo test. This gives us clearer pictures of your heart.

What are the risks and benefits of this test?

This test will tell us more about your heart. It helps your doctor decide what kind of treatment you may need (if any).

The echo test itself is harmless. If you have an IV, there is a small risk of infection at the needle site.

If you receive Optison or Definity, there is a small chance that side effects will occur. Your care team will discuss the risks in advance.

When will I know my results?

You should have your results within a few days. If you have not heard from us within one week, call your doctor.