CARDIAC & ENDOVASCULAR CENTER

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



Echocardiography (Ultrasound Imaging)

What is an echocardiogram?

An Echocardiogram is a non-invasive, risk-free test that uses ultrasound waves to create a moving picture of your heart as it works to assess cardiac structure and mobility, particularly of the valves. During the test, a small transducer is held against the chest. The transducer sends ultrasound waves that bounce off parts of the heart. A computer uses the information coming from the transducer to make an image of the heart. The image is displayed on a monitor, and it can be recorded on videotape or printed on paper.

What is an echocardiogram for?

The Echocardiogram gives your doctor information about the heart, such as:

- Size of the heart The echo is used for measuring the size of the heart chambers and thickness of the heart muscle.
- *Pumping strength* The test shows whether the heart is pumping at full strength or is weakened. It can also help determine whether the various parts of the heart pump equally.
- *Valve problems* The echo shows the shape and motion of the heart valves. It can help determine if a valve is narrowed or leaking and shows how severe the valve problem is.
- Other uses The echo may be used to detect the presence of fluid around the heart, blood clots, or masses inside the heart, and abnormal holes between heart chambers. Sometimes, the echo is combined with an exercise or dobutamine stress test to see how well the heart pumps when it is accelerated.

How do I prepare for the procedure?

There is no special preparation for Echocardiography. You may eat and go about your normal activities, unless you are told otherwise. Make sure you wear a two-piece outfit because you will be instructed to undress from the waist up and wear a hospital gown.

What happens during the procedure?

You will lie on a specialized echo exam bed. Electrodes (small sticky patches) are placed on the chest and shoulders to monitor the heartbeat. You will need to lie quietly during the test on your left side with your head elevated slightly. An odorless water-soluble gel is applied to the chest. An echo tech moves the transducer over the chest to obtain different views of your heart.

You may be asked to change positions and to exhale or hold your breath for a few seconds. The images are digitally recorded and stored. The echo tech is not authorized to give you your results.

How long does this test take?

The test is painless and takes 45 minutes to complete.

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We offer services to both the pediatric and adult population on an outpatient and inpatient basis. Our hours of operation are 6:00am to 9:00pm Monday through Friday and 7:00 am to 9:00pm Saturday and Sunday.

To schedule an appointment call Central Scheduling at 781.979.7111

