



Having a “Bubble” echocardiogram

Your doctor has referred you for a “Bubble” echocardiogram. This leaflet explains what it does and how it is carried out.

What is a Bubble echocardiogram?

- An echocardiogram or ‘echo’ is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is painless and does not use radioactivity.
- During a “Bubble” echo, very small salt water bubbles are injected through a cannula (fine tube) in your arm.

Why is it being done?

- A “Bubble” echo can be useful to establish whether there is a small hole directly connecting the right and the left side of your heart.

What does it involve?

- You will be taken into a darkened room. Usually, a doctor and a trained sonographer will be present and will perform the test.
- You will be asked to undress to the waist and put on a gown that should be left open to the front. You will be asked to lie on a couch on your left hand side.
- Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the echo machine. These will be used to monitor your heart rate during the test. A cannula (thin tube) will be placed in your arm.
- We will record a number of pictures of your heart. While this is happening, the salt water bubbles will be injected into the cannula. We might ask you to follow some breathing guidance and repeat the injection to make the presence of a small hole in the heart more visible.
- The echocardiogram will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Are there any special precautions that I need to take beforehand?

- No. You can take all your medication as normal. You can eat and drink as normal.

At the end of your echocardiogram

- Once the procedure is complete you can get dressed and leave. There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan, for example, you may drive.

Are there any risks in having the Bubble echo?

- The echocardiogram uses ultrasound and can safely be performed on adults, children and babies alike. There is no risk to unborn babies. The bubble injection is not known to cause any harm. Cannulation carries a small risk of bruising at the cannulation site.

Where will the test take place?

- You will need to attend the Cardiac Department, Level 1 Battle Block at the date and time stated in your letter. **Please arrive 15 minutes before your stated appointment time.**
- If you have any queries please contact the department on 0118 322 6515.

Useful contacts

Cardiac Reception Enquiries 0118 322 6515
Clinical Admin Team (CAT 11) (bookings): 0118 322 6676 (Mon - Fri, 8am - 5pm)
British Heart Foundation: www.bhf.org.uk

This leaflet is printed privately for the Cardiac Fund. It was set up in 1976 for the purpose of providing cardiac services that would otherwise not be available through National Health resources. Our Cardiac Laboratory was largely equipped through the fund and many other areas in the Department have also benefited from equipment and staff training.



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