

Having a “Bubble” echocardiogram

Your doctor has decided that you should have a “Bubble” echocardiogram. This leaflet explains what it does and how it is carried out.

What is it?

- ♥ 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 therefore 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 performing 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 will be placed in your arm.
- ♥ We will record a number of pictures of the 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 appearance of a small hole in the heart more likely.
- ♥ The echocardiogram will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Are there any special precautions that I need to take before the echocardiogram?

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

At the end of your echocardiogram

- ♥ Once the echocardiogram 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 mentioned on the attached letter. **We would be grateful if you could arrive 15 minutes before your stated appointment time.**
- ♥ If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the department on 0118 322 6515.

Useful contacts

Royal Berkshire Hospital 0118 322 5111
Cardiac Reception Enquiries 0118 322 6515
British Heart Foundation: www.bhf.org.uk
West Berkshire Heart Support Group – ‘Heartbeats’
Heartbeats website: www.heartbeats-berkshire.co.uk

More information is available on the Trust website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Department of Cardiology, July 2017.
Review due: July 2019