

What is an Echo?

An Echo uses sound waves to form a picture of the heart valves and heart muscle. The Echo machine sends sound waves to a transducer (a sound sensitive instrument) that is placed on the chest. The sound waves are reflected by the heart walls (muscle) and heart valves, back to the transducer, which changes the sound into a picture.

An Echo provides information about heart chamber size, wall motion, valve movements, and structural changes in and around the heart.

There is no special preparation for this test. This test is usually done in the Echo Lab, but may be done in a clinic, or in the patient's room.

In the Echo Lab

You will be asked to remove clothing above the waist. EKG patches will be placed on your chest. You will be lying on your back or left side. A doctor or technician will apply gel, which feels cold, to your chest and a transducer will be placed over the heart area. Heart structures will be examined by changing the direction of the transducer. The sound waves cause no discomfort. You may hear a "whooshing" sound, timed with your heart beat. This is the blood movement near the transducer. An EKG will be recording the electrical activity of your heart which will help the doctor interpret your test.

When the test is completed the gel can be wiped off easily.

Considerations

An Echo takes about 45 minutes.

The first results are available right after the test. After further review, the final results will be sent to your University Hospital doctor.

Do you have any questions? Feel free to ask your doctor, a nurse, or the Echo Lab staff.