

Patient information

Exercise Stress Echocardiogram

Your doctor has decided that you should have an exercise stress echocardiogram

What is it?

- ♥ An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is safe, painless and does not use radioactivity.
- ♥ During an exercise echo, your doctor will ask you to walk on a treadmill, and then pictures are taken of your heart.

Why is it being done?

- ♥ An exercise echo allows your doctor to understand how the heart muscle copes when it is made to work harder.
- ♥ An exercise echo can also give your doctor information about the severity of a heart-valve problem

What does it involve?

- ♥ You will be taken into a darkened room. Three people will usually be present when you have the test – a doctor, a cardiac physiologist and an assistant.
- ♥ You will be asked to undress to the waist and put on a gown. 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 machine. These will be used to monitor your heart rate and rhythm. Your blood pressure will also be checked regularly throughout the test. Occasionally the doctor may need to inject "contrast", which improves the quality of the images recorded. If this is the case, a cannula will be placed in the vein in your arm.
- ♥ Pictures of your heart will be recorded on the machine. You will then be asked to

exercise by walking on a treadmill. The exercise will be gentle at first but will get progressively more strenuous.

- ♥ When the doctor has decided that you have performed enough exercise, or if you are unable to continue, the doctor will ask you to lie back on the couch and more images of the heart will be recorded. You will continue to have your heart rate and blood pressure monitored until you have fully recovered, which may take several minutes.
- ♥ Overall the exercise echo will take around 30-45 minutes to complete.

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

- ♥ **You must NOT take beta-blocker or calcium-channel blocker tablets for 48 hours before the test.** Beta-blocker tablets include Atenolol, Bisoprolol and Carvedilol, although there are others. Calcium-channel blockers are called Diltiazem and Verapamil. These tablets prevent the heart from working hard. If you do continue with beta-blocker or calcium-channel blocker drugs, the Exercise Echo may need to be postponed. If you have any doubts, please contact your Doctors' secretary or this unit.
- ♥ You should continue other medications as usual.

At the end of your echocardiogram

- ♥ You will be able to return home after the test has been completed. You may undertake your day-to-day activities as usual.

Are there any risks in having the exercise echo?

- ♥ The exercise echo scan is extremely safe - it is just like exercising at home.
- ♥ There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction if contrast is used. **If you have had allergic reactions to any medicines before please inform your doctor before starting the test.**

Further information/contact

If you have any queries please contact the Diagnostic Reception on 01284 712536.

Reference: British Society of Echocardiography

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the hospital website www.wsh.nhs.uk and click on the link, or visit the disabledgo website:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>

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