

## Patient information

# Transthoracic echocardiogram

This leaflet is designed for patients undergoing anthracycline / HER2-targeted therapy who are having a transthoracic echocardiogram performed before, during or after their treatment.

### What is an echo?

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart and nearby blood vessels.

### Will it hurt?

A standard echocardiogram is a painless, safe procedure. It does not use radiation.

There are no side effects from the scan, although the ultrasound gel may feel cold and some pressure may be applied with the ultrasound probe in order to obtain the pictures.

### What is an echocardiogram for?

- An echocardiogram can help diagnose and monitor certain heart conditions by checking the structure of the heart and surrounding blood vessels and analysing how blood flows through them. It is also used to assess the pumping chambers of the heart.
- In the oncology setting echo is used as a screening tool to assess heart function at baseline and throughout your treatment and will help us to detect any early signs of heart dysfunction.

### What does it involve?

- There are no special precautions that you need to take prior to the test,

please take any current medication as normal (unless told otherwise) and eat and drink as normal.

- The echocardiogram is performed in a darkened room. The person performing the scan is called a physiologist, they may be male or female. There may be additional staff in the room such as another physiologist, a Doctor or both.
- You will be asked to undress from the waist up and put on a gown, which has the opening at the front. You will be asked to lay on a couch, usually on your left-hand side with your left arm above your head. If you require a chaperone please inform the department.
- Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the machine, this is used to monitor your heart rate and rhythm during the scan.
- An ultrasound probe with a small amount of gel will be placed onto the centre of your chest and moved to different positions such as beneath your left breast, under you rib cage and onto your neck.
- During the echocardiogram you will hear sounds coming from the machine which represent blood flow through the heart.

## **What will happen on the day?**

You will need to attend the Cardiac Diagnostic department which is situated in the Cardiac Centre on the lower ground floor of the main hospital. Please use the main hospital entrance or the hospital rear entrance (pharmacy). Please book in at the diagnostic cardiology reception desk when you arrive.

## **How long will it take?**

The scan may take up to an hour to complete, you will also have your blood pressure taken during your visit.

## **What happens after the test? How do I get the result?**

There are no limitations on what you can do after the scan, for example you may drive.

The majority of the image analysis is carried out after the scan; therefore, it will not be possible to provide you with a result or clinical information on the day. The doctor that requested the test will inform you of your result.

## Alternatives/other procedures

In certain circumstances it may be necessary for you to have a 'contrast echocardiogram'. This is the same procedure but involves a cannula being inserted into your arm through which a special type of dye is injected in order to see your heart more clearly. In this event you will be provided with further information about the procedure.

## References / sources of evidence

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/echocardiogram/>

<https://www.bsecho.org/Public/Communities/Patients-subpages/Patient-information.aspx>

## Contacts / further information

Diagnostic cardiology: 01284 712536

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email [info.gov@wsh.nhs.uk](mailto:info.gov@wsh.nhs.uk). This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk>*



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