Echocardiogram | A Patient Prep Guide

OakLeaf CLINICS

Why do I need this test?

An echocardiogram (or "echo") is a painless test that uses ultrasound (high frequency sound waves) to get a picture of the heart chambers and valves. The sound waves bounce back from the heart, producing images and sounds that can be used by the physician to detect damage and disease. The most common reasons for doing the exam are:

- To check the health and performance of the heart valves.
- To measure the heart wall shape and to check for abnormalities in the heart wall motion.
- To detect disease or build up fluid in the sack around the heart.
- To identify blood clots.
- To check the condition of certain blood vessels.

What happens before the test?

We ask that the patient not have any caffeine one hour prior to the exam.

What happens during the test?

Plan to be at the clinic for up to an hour.

- The technologist will go over all benefits and risks and answer any questions before asking you to sign a consent form.
- You will be asked to change into a patient gown.
- Once you are in the room, you will be asked to lie on your left side.
- The technologist will place 3 EKG leads with stickers on to record your heart rate and rhythm.
- The technologist will use a hand-held device called a transducer to send and receive ultrasound signals. A computer then calculates the travel time of the waves to and from the heart and constructs an image of the heart onto a monitor.
- If the technologist is unable to see the walls of your heart well enough to get diagnostic quality images, they may ask for your consent to start an IV and administer an enhancing agent called Definity.
- An echo does not require the use of radiation and produces a very reliable image, making the test safe and painless.

What happens after the test?

There are no restrictions or limitations after your test, unless otherwise instructed by your doctor. You may resume your usual diet, fluids, medications and activity.

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