

TESTfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Echocardiogram and Echocardiogram with Contrast

What is an Echocardiogram?

Your doctor has suggested you have an echocardiogram as part of your evaluation at National Jewish. An echocardiogram is an ultrasound of the heart. The ultrasound shows the structures and functions of the heart muscle and heart valves from different angles. It does this by using sound waves.

What is an Echocardiogram with Contrast?

Your doctor may also want to use contrast with the echocardiogram. Contrast is used during an echocardiogram to see the flow of blood through the heart and the heart muscle better.

Saline (sterile salt water) and Definity are contrast solutions which may be used. Each can show the flow of blood through the heart and enhance the pictures of the heart.

When saline is used the saline is shaken to create **very** small harmless bubbles of air that are injected into the IV. When Definity is used this is also injected into the IV during the echocardiogram. The agitated saline or Definity can be seen flowing through the heart during the echocardiogram.

The echocardiogram and echocardiogram with contrast can help your doctor determine a diagnosis. Your doctor will use this information to determine the best treatment for you.

How do you get ready for the test?

- ✓ Wear clothing you can remove from the waist up. You will be given a gown to wear.

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- ✓ Please arrive 30 minutes before the test is scheduled. The nurse or sonographer will ask you questions before the echocardiogram.

What is done during the test?

The nurse or sonographer will explain the test to you before you start. Ask questions if you don't understand. Before the test you will need to remove all clothing and jewelry from the waist up. You will be given a hospital gown to wear.

If you are having an echocardiogram with contrast the nurse will start an IV. The IV will be used to give you the contrast solution. You will feel a prick when the IV is started.

The echocardiogram does not hurt. You will lie still on a table during the procedure. The technologist will have you lie on your side and back during the procedure.

The technologist will place small adhesives electrodes on your chest. Gel will be placed on your chest and on a probe. The probe is what makes the sound waves. The probe will be moved around your chest while you are lying on your side and back.

What should you do after the test?

You can resume your normal activity after the test is complete.

How long will the test take?

An echocardiogram will take about 1 hour. An echocardiogram with contrast will take an additional 15 to 30 minutes for each (saline or Definity).

How do you get to your test?

If you are having an echocardiogram your appointment is in cardiology. Cardiology located in the adult clinic in the Smith Building. You will be directed where to go when you check-in.

If you have any questions you can contact the Cardiology Department at 303-270-2670.