

Cardiac Ultrasound Bubble Contrast Study

Information for patients,
relatives and carers





This leaflet explains what to expect when you come to hospital for a Cardiac Ultrasound which is sometimes called an Echocardiogram or Echo. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have.

What is a Bubble Contrast Echocardiogram?

A Bubble Contrast Echocardiogram (Echo) is a painless test which uses ultrasound and agitated saline bubble contrast (saltwater containing micro bubbles) to assess the structure and function of your heart.

Why am I having a Bubble Contrast Echocardiogram?

A Bubble Contrast echo allows us to provide your doctor with detailed information about your heart; the majority of these scans are undertaken to check if there is a hole in your heart or if there is an abnormality with the blood vessels in your lungs.

What does a Bubble Contrast Echocardiogram involve?

The test will usually be performed by a healthcare professional that is trained as a sonographer; they have specialist training in echocardiography. It will take place in a darkened, private room and you will be asked to remove all clothing from the waist up and wear a gown with the opening at the front.

This procedure is performed by male and female sonographers so please let us know in advance if you require a chaperone.

A small plastic tube called a cannula will be inserted into a vein in your arm so that very small amounts of the agitated saline can be injected. You should not feel any adverse effects from the liquid and the bubbles are naturally filtered out by the lungs. The tube will be removed before you leave the department.

ECG (Electrocardiogram) stickers will be applied to your chest and attached to wires to allow your heart rate and rhythm to be monitored during the scan.

You will then be asked to lie on your left side on a scanning couch and a small amount of ultrasound gel will be firstly applied to the centre of your chest; the ultrasound probe will then be moved into different positions, beneath the left breast area, under your rib cage and on the base of your neck. This allows images of your heart to be obtained from different angles. Some images will be taken whilst the bubble contrast is being injected and you may be asked to perform special breathing techniques, these will be explained to you during the test.

You will hear sounds coming from the echo machine during the scan and this is nothing to worry about – it is the sound of blood moving through your heart.

Your test may be carried out by a trainee cardiac physiologist or cardiology registrar (under supervision from a senior sonographer who may come in at the end of the scan and review the images before you leave).

The test will take approximately 30-40 minutes to perform.

Are there any risks to the scan?

Ultrasound is considered a safe test. You will have opportunity to discuss any concerns with your Physiologist and Nurse on the day, prior to your scan.

Are there any precautions I need to take before the scan?

No, you can eat, drink, and take prescribed medication as normal before the test.

What happens after my scan?

A report will be written by the sonographer after the scan and will be sent on to the doctor that referred you for the test. The doctor will then be in touch with the results or will discuss them with you at your next appointment.

There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan you can carry on as normal.

Can I get an Interpreter?

If English is not your first language we will need to know at least 72 hours before your appointment so that we can book an appropriate Interpreter. We do not allow family or friends to act as an Interpreter.

What happens if I am late or fail to attend my appointment?

If you are late for your appointment you may not be seen, if you think you are going to be late you should contact the department to confirm if you will be seen or not. If you fail to attend you will not automatically receive another appointment. Your referral will be returned to the Doctor who requested the test.

If you need to change your appointment

If you need to cancel or reschedule your appointment please contact the department on these numbers:

Leeds General Infirmary

0113 392 2569

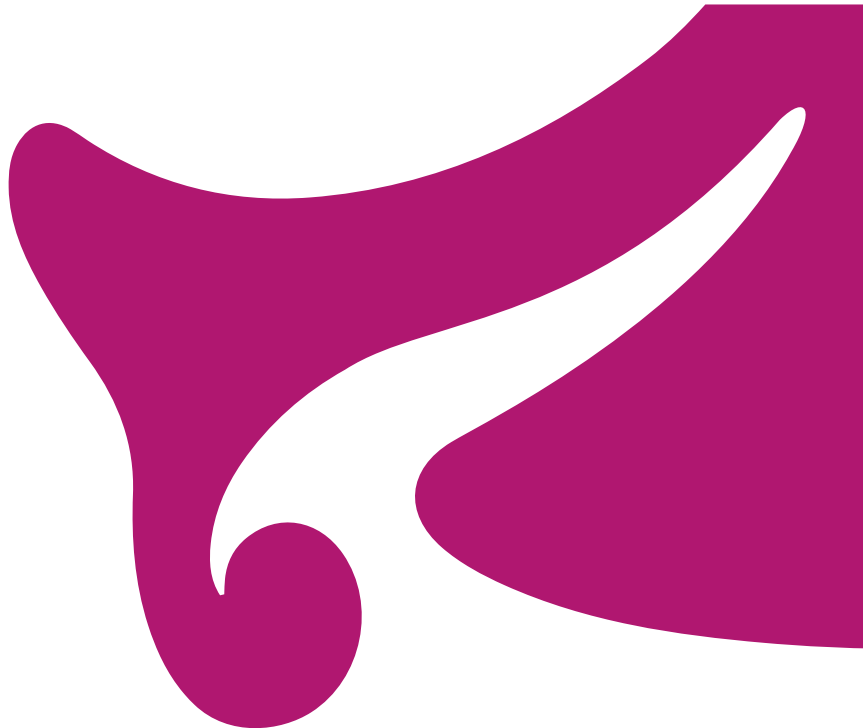
St James Hospital, Seacroft Hospital and Wharfedale Hospital

0113 206 5930 or 0113 206 4759

For more information about outpatient appointments at The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust hold your smartphone camera over the QR code and follow the link.

Speech, reading and translation support tools are available on this link.





What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft

Your views matter



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