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Echocardiogram

What is an echocardiogram?

An echocardiogram is an ultrasound of the heart. Sound waves are used to create a moving picture which shows the structure and function of the heart muscle and valves. There is no ionized radiation exposure during this test. (In other words, it's not like an X-ray or CT Scan)

How is the test performed?

A trained sonographer (ultrasound technologist) performs the test and a cardiologist (heart doctor) interprets the results.

Electrodes (small conducting stickers) are placed on your chest so the equipment can record your heart rate and rhythm. An instrument called a transducer is placed on your ribs near the breast bone and is directed toward your heart. This transducer releases high-frequency sound waves and will be moved by the sonographer to take images from different locations on your chest.

Doppler imaging is used to record the motion of blood through the heart and may make sounds for the sonographer to use to improve the quality of the recording.

How should I prepare for the test?

There is no special preparation required.

How will the test feel?

This should be a painless test for most patients. You will be asked to lay down on your back or on your side in a darkened room. There will be cool gel applied to the chest to ease motion of the transducer. The transducer may be applied with slight pressure which may cause discomfort for some patients.



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Why did my doctor ask for this test?

An echocardiogram may be performed for evaluation of signs or symptoms suggesting (but are not limited to):

- Heart attack or stroke
- Palpitations
- Heart murmur
- Shortness of breath
- High blood pressure
- Congenital heart disease
- Infection or inflammation involving the heart
- Decreased heart function