

Stress Echocardiography

Cardiology Department Medicine

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries you may have.

Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

This leaflet has been compiled to help you understand the test you are having and to give you some general information about what to expect.

Benefits

Stress Echo is performed as it allows your Doctor to understand how the heart copes when it is made to work harder. A Stress Echo is useful to diagnose whether you have angina or not. It can also give your Doctor information about the severity of a heart-valve problem.

Risks

A Stress Echo scan is extremely safe, but there are some risks you need to be aware of.

There is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction if contrast is used. **If you have had allergic reactions to any medicines before please inform your Doctor before starting the test.**

Exercise Stress Echo

If you suffer with angina, there is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) you may have a small heart attack during the test.

Pharmacological Stress Echo

The stress medicine will make your heart beat harder and faster, which you may notice. Occasionally the stress medicine may make you feel sick or dizzy. Let the team know of any symptoms you are aware of. Once the stress medicine is stopped, you will feel back to normal very quickly.

Rarely (around 1 in 1000 patients), the stress medicine may make the heart develop an abnormal rhythm. If this occurs, it will often settle down by simply stopping the stress medicine, but occasionally you may need additional treatment for this which we will arrange.

There is a very small risk (less than 1 in 2000) of a bad angina attack or heart attack occurring during the test.

Alternatives

Please discuss alternative investigations with your Doctor.

Important Information

You must NOT take beta-blockers or calcium-channel blocker tablets or Ivabradine for 48 hours prior to the test. Beta-blocker tablets include Atenolol, Bisoprolol and Carvedilol, although there are others. Calcium-channel blockers are called Diltiazem and Verapamil. These tablets prevent the heart from working hard. If you do continue with beta-blocker or



Information for patients and visitors

calcium-channel blocker drugs, the Exercise Echo may need to be postponed. If you have any queries, please contact us.

You should continue other medications as usual.

You must NOT eat for two hours before the test, but you may drink water.

Stress Echocardiography

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is painless and does not use radioactivity.

A Stress Echo is an echo performed as your heart is made to work harder. This may be by physical exercise such as walking on a treadmill or pharmacologically where the Doctor will give medicine to make the heart beat harder and faster. The Doctor will decide which method is most appropriate for you.

You will be asked to undress to the waist and put on a gown that should be left open to the front. You will be asked to lie on a couch on your left hand side.

Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the machine. These will be used to monitor your heart rate. Your blood pressure will also be checked regularly throughout the test. A drip may be placed in the vein in your arm, if the doctor needs to inject contrast which improves the quality of the images recorded.

Pictures of your heart will be recorded on the machine.

If you are having an exercise stress Echo you will then be asked to exercise by walking on a treadmill. The exercise will be gentle at first but will get progressively more strenuous. Please wear suitable clothing and footwear. When the Doctor has decided that you have performed enough exercise, or if you are unable to continue, the Doctor will ask you to lie back on the couch and more images of the heart will be recorded. You will continue to have your heart rate and blood pressure monitored until you have fully recovered, which may take several minutes.

If you are having a Pharmacological Stress Echo a drip will be put in the vein in your arm. Some 'stress' medicine will be infused into the drip, which makes the heart work harder. Whilst this is happening the Sonographer will take pictures of your heart using an ultrasound probe gently placed on your chest.

When your heart has been made to work hard enough, the Doctor will stop the medicine. The Sonographer will continue to take pictures of the heart, and you will continue to be monitored until the effects of the stress medicine have worn off. This may take several minutes.

Overall the Stress Echo takes approximately 45 minutes to complete.

After the echo you will occasionally be asked just to sit quietly for around 20 minutes to make sure the effects of the stress medicine have completely worn off.

You will be able to return home after this. If you have had a pharmacological stress echo it is advisable that you do not drive yourself for the remainder of the day, so you may need a friend or relative to transport you.

Information for patients and visitors

Reference Section

Information taken from the British Society of Echocardiography (<https://www.bsecho.org/>)

Should you require further information regarding heart investigations you may find the following websites useful:

The British Cardiac Society (<https://www.bcs.com/>)

The British Heart Foundation (<https://www.bhf.org.uk/>)

Contact details for Further Information

For Scunthorpe General Hospital contact Cardio-Respiratory Department on:

Telephone No: 03033 302815

For Diana, Princess of Wales contact Cardiology Department on:

Telephone number: 03033 302569

Concerns and Queries

If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital – you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 03033 306518 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital – you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 03033 306518 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email:

nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

Diana Princess of Wales Hospital

Scartho Road

Grimsby

DN33 2BA

Scunthorpe General Hospital

Cliff Gardens

Scunthorpe

DN15 7BH

Goole & District Hospital

Woodland Avenue

Goole

DN14 6RX



Information for patients and visitors

03033 306999

www.nlg.nhs.uk

Date of issue: July, 2017

Review Period: July, 2020

Author: Chief Cardiac Physiologist

IFP-955

© NLGFT 2017

