

# Exercise Stress Echocardiography

## Procedure information for patients

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Your doctor has recommended a test called an exercise stress echocardiogram. Please take some time to read this information sheet and discuss any questions or concerns you may have with a medical professional.

### What is an echocardiogram?

Echocardiography (echo) uses ultrasound waves to create detailed images of your heart. Moving images of your heart are used to assess your heart function. There are four chambers of the heart and four heart valves which will be assessed during the scan.

During an exercise stress echo, your doctor will ask you to walk on a treadmill or ride an exercise bike whilst pictures are taken of your heart.

### Why is this test being performed?

An exercise stress echo is performed as it allows your doctor to understand how the heart copes when it is made to work harder.

An exercise 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.

**You should take all your medications as usual unless otherwise informed. Please eat and drink as normal.**

### During the procedure

You will be taken into a darkened room. At least two people will usually be present when you have the test: a Doctor, a Sonographer and occasionally an assistant.

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 cannula (small plastic tube) may be placed in the vein in your arm if the doctor needs to inject contrast, which improves the quality of the images recorded.

A small probe and gel will be placed on the front side of your chest and pictures of your heart will be recorded on the machine. You will then be asked to exercise- usually by walking on a treadmill while attached to an ECG (electrocardiogram) monitor, which will measure your heart rate. The exercise will be gentle at first but will get progressively more difficult.

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 your 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.

Overall the exercise stress echo will take around 60 minutes to complete.

The recorded pictures will be reviewed and a written report will be sent to the requesting doctor.

## Are there any risks in having the exercise stress echo?

The exercise stress echo scan is extremely safe as it is just like exercising as if you were at home.

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.**

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. A doctor is present and will monitor your situation throughout the test.

## Chaperone

If you need a chaperone, you may bring a friend or relative. Alternatively, the hospital may provide a chaperone at your request.

## What happens next?

Once the echocardiogram is complete you can get dressed and leave. There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan.

## Contacting us about your appointment

If you have any questions about your appointment, or need to cancel or change it, please contact the department in advance using the telephone number on your appointment letter.

## Public transport and travel information

### Bus details available from:

Lothian Buses on 0131 555 6363 [www.lothianbuses.co.uk](http://www.lothianbuses.co.uk)

Traveline Scotland on 08712002233 or [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com)

### Train details available from:

National Rail Enquiries on 03457 484 950 or [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

## Patient transport

Patient transport will only be made available if you have a medical/clinical need. Please telephone 0300 123 1236 (calls will be charged at local rate) up to 28 days in advance to book. Make sure you have your CHI number when booking. The CHI number can be found on your appointment letter. Hard of hearing or speech impaired please use Text Relay: 18001 0300123 1236 (calls charged at local rates). To cancel patient transport please call 0800 389 1333 (Freephone 24hr answer service).

## Interpretation and translation

Your GP will inform us of any interpreting requirements you have before you come to hospital and we will provide an appropriate interpreter. If you are having this procedure as an existing inpatient, staff will arrange interpreting support for you in advance of this procedure. This leaflet may be made available in a larger print, Braille or your community language.