

**INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS**

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# Bubble contrast echocardiogram

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This leaflet gives you information about the test that has been booked for you.

## **What is a bubble contrast echocardiogram?**

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is painless and without side effects. It does not use radioactivity.

During the test, saline (salty water) contrast agent is injected through a cannula (small plastic tube) in your arm. The saline is mixed so that it contains very tiny bubbles. The contrast improves the quality of the image and we can watch the bubbles move through your heart chambers.

## **Why is it being done?**

The test can be used to help diagnose a small hole between the heart chambers.

## **What does it involve?**

You will be taken into a room with low level lighting. The person performing the test is called a sonographer, who may be male or female. The sonographer will usually not be a doctor. This means that some questions you may have about the result may have to wait until you see your doctor.

You will be asked to undress to the waist, gowns are available 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 during the test. A cannula will be placed in your arm.

An ultrasound probe covered by a small amount of gel is placed gently on the chest and the sonographer will record a number of pictures of the heart. Whilst this is happening, the saline will be injected into the cannula. You may be asked to cough/sniff, hold your breath or strain whilst some the images are being taken.

## **How long will it take?**

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

## **What preparation is needed?**

You can take all your medication as normal. You can eat and drink as normal.

## **At the end of your bubble contrast echo**

Once the test is complete, we ask for you to wait for 10 minutes in the clinic to ensure you do not experience any side effects.

There are no limitations to what you can do after the scan, for example, you may drive.

### **When will I receive the results?**

The images are analysed on special software after the test and the result of this will be sent to your consultant. Your consultant will give you your results at your next clinic appointment.

### **Are there any risks in having the bubble contrast echo?**

It is a very safe test. There are a very small number of reports world-wide of stroke or mini-stroke following this procedure, but the risk is very low. You may have some discomfort from the area where the cannula was inserted in your arm.

### **What if I need hospital transport?**

If you need hospital transport due to medical reasons you will need to arrange this by using one of the numbers below:

- Nottinghamshire/Leicester: 0345 266 9662
- Derbyshire: 0300 300 3434
- Lincolnshire: 0843 357 1556.

### **Contact details**

Cardiorespiratory and Vascular  
Department: **01623 672259**.

### **Where will I have the test?**

Please note this is a specialised test and only available at the King's Mill Hospital site.

### **Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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