

Stress Echocardiogram (Stress Echo)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Stress Echo?

A stress echo is a test that takes a picture of the heart with the use of a probe placed outside your chest wall while your heart is working hard. To “stress” the heart, you will either be asked to exercise or be given medication (dobutamine/persantine) that will make your heart beat harder and faster just like it would during exercise. The pictures taken before, during and after your heart is “stressed” are displayed on the ultrasound machine monitor and are recorded on disk for review and comparison. At UHN, the stress echo is performed by a sonographer and interpreted by a cardiologist.

The stress echo is valuable in the assessment of function of heart muscle when the heart is working hard.

The expected stay in the Echo lab is approximately 1-2 hours.

What preparation is necessary for the stress echo?

There is no special preparation for a stress echo. We do suggest not taking a full meal immediately before your test. Medications can be taken with a sip of water unless you are instructed by your doctor not to.

Bring your UHN hospital card and a valid health card when you come for your test. Providing a list of medications you take can also be useful.

What happens on the day of the test?

Before the test:

- A receptionist will ask for your hospital and health cards. If you do not have a hospital card, you will be asked to go to Patient Registration to get one.
- A sonographer will escort you to a change room where you will be asked to remove all clothing from the waist up. A patient gown will be provided.
- You will be taken into the procedure room. Please take your valuables with you.

During the test:

- Monitors will be attached to you to record your heart rate, heart rhythm, and blood pressure during the test.
- For dobutamine/persantine stress echo, a needle will be inserted into an arm vein to give you the medication.
- For exercise stress echo, you will run on a treadmill until you reach peak exercise.
- You will be asked to lie on your left side. The sonographer will take pictures of your heart.

After the test:

- The report will be sent to the doctor who requested the stress echo and he/she will discuss the results with you at a later time.

Contact Us:

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