PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Stress Echocardiogram

This information explains what a stress echocardiogram (EH-koh-KAR-dee-oh-gram) is and what to expect during your procedure.

About your stress echocardiogram

An echocardiogram, or echo, is a procedure that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to create pictures of your heart. These pictures show the different parts of your heart and how they're working.

Your echo lets your doctor see:

- How well your heart valves are working.
- How well your heart muscle is moving.
- How your blood is flowing through your heart valves and heart chambers.
- The size of the 4 chambers of your heart.

If your heart is not working as it should, you may have chest pain or trouble breathing. These symptoms can also be caused by other conditions. Your echo can help

your doctor find the cause of these symptoms.

It can also give them information about your coronary arteries. These are the blood vessels that carry blood to your heart. Your coronary arteries can become narrow because of high cholesterol.

Some people may need to get an ultrasound enhancing agent (UEA) for their echo. A UEA helps your doctor see the parts of your heart better. If you will need a UEA, your healthcare provider will give you more information about it.

What to do before your stress echocardiogram

- Talk with your doctor about your medications. Ask them if you will need to stop taking any of your medications before your procedure.
- If you have diabetes, talk with the healthcare provider who prescribes your insulin or other medications for diabetes. They may need to change the dose of medications you take for diabetes. Ask them what you should do the morning of your procedure.
- **Do not eat or drink anything 4 hours before your procedure.**
- **Do not smoke for 24 hours (1 day) before your**

procedure.

What to expect during your stress echocardiogram

On the day of your procedure, wear a shirt that’s easy to take off. You will need to take it off to put on a hospital gown. You can keep your pants, shorts, or skirt on during your procedure. Wear rubber-soled shoes or bring them with you to your procedure.

There are 4 steps in this procedure. You will have:

1. An electrocardiogram (ee-LEK-troh-KAR-dee-oh-gram). An electrocardiogram, or EKG, is a test that records your heart’s electrical activity. Your blood pressure will also be measured.
2. A resting echo. During a resting echo, you will lie on an exam table on your left side. Your technician will put a gel on your chest. The gel helps conduct the signals from your heart, so the technician can see images of your heart.

   Next, your technician will place a handheld wand called a transducer on different areas of your chest. The transducer will use sound waves from your heart to create pictures. The pictures will appear on an ultrasound screen.

You may have mild discomfort during the resting echo from the slight pressure of the transducer.

3. Another EKG and blood pressure measurement while you walk on a treadmill.
4. A stress echo. This is done after you have raised your heart rate on the treadmill. Doing a stress echo after physical activity helps your doctor see how well your heart works under stress. The stress echo is done the same way as the resting echo.

   You may have mild discomfort during the stress echo from the slight pressure of the transducer.

The whole procedure will take about 90 minutes.

What to expect after your stress echocardiogram

Your doctor should have the results of your echo 24 hours after your procedure. If you don’t hear from your doctor after a few days, call their office to get your results.

If you have a MyMSK account, you will be able to see your results as soon as they’re available. You may see them before your doctor does. While some results are easy to understand, others may be confusing or

worrying.

You can choose to look at your results, but we recommend waiting until your doctor calls you. They usually call within 24 hours of your echo. They can explain what your results mean.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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