



Echocardiograms

This information sheet explains about echocardiograms (Echo), what is involved and what to expect when your child comes to Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) for the scan.

What is an echocardiogram?

Echocardiograms (Echo) are one of the most frequently used scans for diagnosing heart problems. An Echo is a non-invasive, high frequency ultrasound scan of the heart. It lets us evaluate the structure, function and blood flow through the heart. Your child will need to lie very still for the scan so it can be helpful to practice doing this at home beforehand.

Are there any alternatives?

While other scans such as x-rays, CT scans and MRI scans can show the structure of your child's heart, an Echo is the best way to show it working. Having an Echo can also avoid the need for other diagnostic tests, such as cardiac catheterisation and angiography that are invasive or other scans, such as MRI or CT scans that might need to be carried out under general anaesthetic.

When you receive your appointment letter

If you are unable to keep this appointment, please inform the department as soon as possible. Sometimes, we can offer the appointment to another child on the waiting list.

The day of the scan

Your child does not need to prepare for the scan, unless it is being carried out under sedation – see our separate information sheet for details. As the scan is of your child's chest area, it would be helpful if they could wear loose clothes they can take off or undo easily.

Please arrive at the Echo department at the time stated in your child's appointment letter.



The scan

You will be able to stay with your child throughout the scan. They will need to take off their clothes and lie on a bed next to the echo machine. The scan can last up to 60 minutes and your child will need to lie very still so good quality pictures can be taken. The echocardiographer will put some gel on your child's chest area and then use a probe to send and receive ultrasound waves to make a picture. You and your child will be able to see the picture on a screen at the side of the bed.

After the scan

The echocardiographer will give you some paper towels so you can rub off the gel. If your child is not having any further tests, you will be free to go home. They will send a report about the scan to your child's doctor.

Are there any risks?

There are no risks associated with an echo scan. The gel used causes no harm, although it may feel a bit cold, and the echo itself is painless with no lasting effects.

If you have any questions, please ask your child's doctor or nurse.

Notes

Compiled by the Walrus Ward (cardiac Day Care)
in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group

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