Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Contrast Echocardiogram

Version number: **1.0**
Last modified date: **12th November 2026**

Contrast Echocardiogram

Patient Information

Cardiology Department

- **Author ID:** KJ
- **Leaflet ref:** Card 014
- **Version:** 7
- **Leaflet title:** Contrast Echocardiogram
- **Last review:** July 2025
- **Expiry Date:** July 2027

What is it?

An echocardiogram or echo is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The scan is painless and does not use radioactivity.

In order to perform a contrast echo, a small cannula (small plastic tube) will be inserted into a vein in your arm or the back of your hand by a specialist nurse or doctor. The contrast agent can then be injected into your vein. This improves the quality of the images that are being recorded helping produce a more accurate report

Benefits

- A contrast agent is used to help improve the quality of the images
- A contrast echo is also used to help diagnose if you have any small holes in the heart.

What does the procedure involve?

You will be taken into a private darkened room in the cardiology department at RAEI. One or two members of staff will usually be present. The person performing the test is called an echo-cardiographer they may be male or female. The echo-cardiographer will usually be a Cardiac Clinical Physiologist and not a doctor. Any questions you may have about the result will have to wait until you see the doctor in clinic.

You will be asked to undress to the waist and be offered a gown that should be left open at the front. You will then be asked to lie on a couch on your left side.

Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the machine. These will be used to monitor your heart rate during the scan. A drip will be placed in your arm.

The echo-cardiographer will record several pictures of the heart. Whilst this is happening, a contrast agent will be injected into the drip. If the doctor is looking for the presence of a hole in the heart, you may be asked to cough and sniff whilst the images are being recorded.

The echocardiogram will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

Are there any special precautions that I need to take before the echocardiogram?

No, you can take all your medication as normal. You can eat and drink as normal.

At the end of the echocardiogram

Once the echocardiogram is complete, you can get dressed and leave. There are no limitations as to what you can do after the scan. You will be able to drive.

Risks

- There is an extremely small risk (1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction to the contrast agent used. If you have had allergic reactions to any medicines before please inform us before starting the scan.

You will be asked to stay for a further 15 to 20 minutes to ensure that you do not have an allergic reaction. If after this time you are worrying that you are having an allergic reaction you should contact the department or your GP if out of hours.

Results

These will be given to you at the next clinic appointment by the referring consultant.

Contact information

Cardiology department, RAEI, **01942 822445**, Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30pm



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