

Cardiology department

# Bubble echocardiogram

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet explains what to expect when you come to hospital for a bubble echocardiogram. We hope it will answer some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have at this time. This leaflet is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed.

### Why do I need to have a bubble echocardiogram?

A bubble echocardiogram can help to diagnose a patent foramen ovale (PFO), commonly known as a [hole in the heart](#), or an atrial septal defect (ASD), a hole between the top two collecting chambers of the heart, the atria. This is a congenital defect (something you're born with) where the valve separating the left and right heart chambers (atrial septums) stays open after birth. Normally, it closes by itself.

By carrying out the bubble echocardiogram your doctor will be able to diagnose you and recommend appropriate treatments.

### How do I prepare for my scan?

No preparation is needed for this scan. You can eat and drink as normal on the day and take all of your regular medication.

**Please arrive on time for your appointment and report to the cardiology reception desk.**

### Before your scan

A member of our team will call you and ask you to change into a gown. They will then explain the test and any potential risks and side effects. You will be able to ask any questions you have. They will then ask you to sign a consent form to show that you understand what the test involves and agree to have it.

### During the scan

We will apply a small amount of gel to your chest and place a probe on your chest to allow the technician to see your heart.

A small tube called a cannula will be inserted into one of the veins in your arm. The bubbles are injected into your blood stream. The physiologist will watch how the solution fills your heart chambers on a screen.

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The test takes between 30 and 45 minutes. The results are sent to the referring physician within 2 to 3 weeks.

**Please note:** Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust is a teaching hospital and there may be trainee medical staff present during your appointment (with your consent).

## What if I cannot make my appointment?

If you cannot make your appointment please contact the cardiology department to cancel or reschedule on **020 3312 1241**.

## Further information

For more information please visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and search for 'hole in the heart'.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)