

## Cardiology

# Contrast echocardiogram

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet explains what will happen when you come to hospital for a contrast 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 contrast echocardiogram?

The scan provides your doctor with specific information about the structure of your heart and the flow of blood to your heart which cannot be detected with an ordinary electrocardiogram (ECG).

A contrast echocardiogram is a specific type of echocardiogram which uses a special dye, SonoVue (called contrast), that is injected into one of the veins in your arms. The dye helps us to see your heart more clearly.

### Before the test

Please let us know before the test if you have any known pre-existing allergies. We will not give the SonoVue if you are allergic to the sulphite component in red wine, sulphonamide antibiotics or sulphur-containing products. Please ask your care team if you have any questions about allergies.

### 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 reception.**

### 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.

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## During the scan

When you enter the examination room, we will ask you to undress to the waist and give you a gown to wear, and then ask you to lie on your left side.

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. We will use this to inject the special dye which allows us to see your heart more clearly. The contrast is very safe, is only used in ultrasound and will not affect your kidneys.

The test takes between 30 and 45mins. The results of your scan will be sent to the referring consultant or GP.

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



## Risks and side effects of the test

In rare circumstances (1 in 10,000), some people may experience an adverse reaction to the contrast. This includes a hypersensitivity reaction, such as:

- reddening or swelling of the skin
- hives
- swelling of the face, hands, feet or ankles
- low blood pressure
- slower heart rate

## What if I cannot make my appointment?

Please call us on **020 3313 5000** to cancel or reschedule.

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## 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)