

Cardiology

Stress echocardiogram

Information for patients, relatives and carers

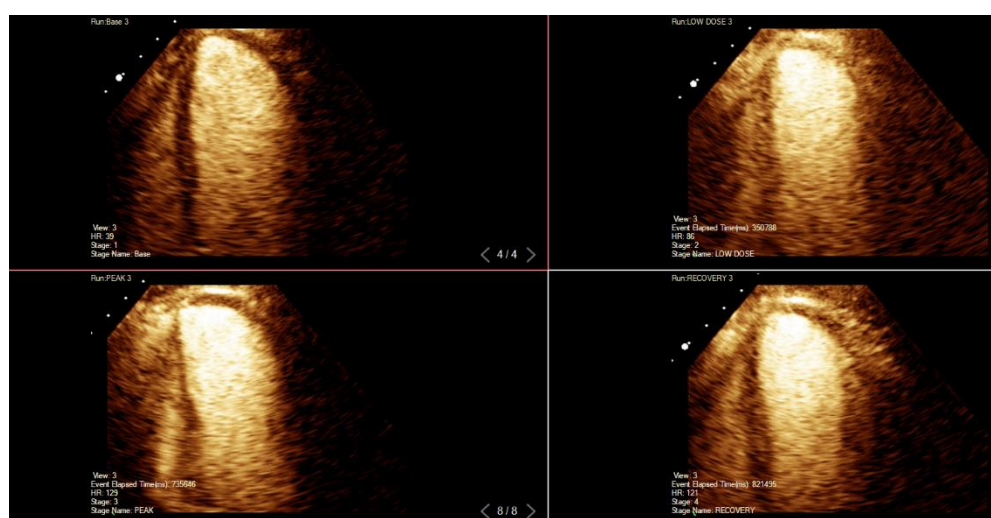
Introduction

This leaflet explains what a stress echocardiogram is and what will happen at your appointment. Please contact your care team if you have any questions.

What is a stress echocardiogram?

This test will assess how well your heart works while under stress (exercise). It does this using both an echocardiogram (ultrasound scan of the heart) and a drug which causes your heart to work harder. Pictures of your heart are taken at rest, while stressed, and after stress.

The whole test takes about an hour.



An example of the images captured during the test

How do I prepare for my scan?

We might ask you to stop specific medications 48 hours before the test, such as beta-blockers and calcium channel blockers.

Tell us before the test if you have allergies, so we can decide whether you can have the test – ask your care team if you have any questions about allergies

If you need a chaperone and/or an interpreter

If you need someone to come to the appointment with you (a chaperone), please tell the receptionist when you arrive for your appointment.

If you need an interpreter, please contact us on the number for your cardiology department (see below), three days before your appointment. We can then book an interpreter for your appointment.

Plan your journey

Many people benefit from planning their journey to the hospital. Knowing your route can help you get there in plenty of time for your appointment. There are a small number of general and disabled car parking spaces at the different hospitals (except for St Mary's).

For help with journey planning, please visit: www.imperial.nhs.uk > [our location](#) > choose the correct hospital > hospital map > parking and www.tfl.gov.uk.

On the day of your appointment

Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the time for your appointment and go to the cardiology reception desk.

Charing Cross Hospital

- 020 3311 1028
- Cardiac Investigation Unit, Fifth floor, Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF

Hammersmith Hospital

- 020 3313 3948
- Cardiac Investigation Unit 2, Hammersmith Hospital, Ground floor, B block, Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS

St Mary's Hospital

- 020 3312 1241
- Waller Cardiovascular Unit, Ground floor, Mary Stanford Wing, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Risks and side effects

Using ultrasound is very safe and there are no known significant risks.

The drugs we use can cause:

- an awareness of your heart beating
- chest pain
- hot flushes
- other symptoms normally associated with exercise, like shortness of breath, dizzy spells

There is a:

- 1 in 100 chance of an irregular heart rhythm – this usually eases once we stop the infusion
- 1 in 4000 chance of a serious heart rhythm abnormality, and of having a heart attack, a stroke and a serious allergic reaction to the medication

The staff doing the procedure are fully trained in dealing with any issues or side effects. Please ask us if you have any questions about the risks and side effects.

During the scan

An echocardiographer will usually do the scan. A nurse specialist will give you the drugs you need for the test, and monitor your ECG and blood pressure.

Before they start, they'll take you to a private room and confirm that you understand the test and that you agree to have it. Please don't hesitate to ask any questions you have about the test.

- we will give you a hospital gown
- you'll lie on a bed
- the nurse/doctor will insert a small needle into a vein in your arm to inject the drugs
- a drug called dobutamine will make your heart pump harder and faster – we might also give you a drug called atropine which increases your heart rate further, if you need it
- we will also inject a contrast agent which helps us see your heart more clearly on the scan
- we'll monitor your blood pressure and heart rhythm ECG throughout the test
- every two to three minutes we'll increase the amount of the dobutamine while we take pictures of your heart
- as we increase the levels of the drugs, you may notice your heart thumping as it works harder and you might experience tightening or pain in your chest, arm or neck – if this

happens, please tell one of the members of staff doing the test, who will keep a close eye on you

- we'll stop giving you the drugs when you have reached the right level of the test
- we'll continue to monitor your heart and take some more pictures for a few minutes until everything has returned to normal

After the test

We will ask you to wait for 15 to 20 minutes in the waiting room before you go home. You can restart your medications after the test.

If you have any further questions, please speak to your care team by calling **020 3312 6198**.

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 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at 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

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

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk