

## ***Preparing for Your Test***

There are no special preparations for an echocardiogram.

## ***What Affects the Test Results?***

You may not be able to have the test or the results may not be helpful if you are:

- Overweight, have a thick chest or large breasts, or have lung disease, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). In these situations, other heart tests may be done.
- Not able to lie still during the test.

## ***What Happens After the Test?***

If your echocardiogram is normal, no further testing may be needed. If the results are concerning, you may need a repeat echocardiogram in several months or other diagnostic tests. In some cases, you may be referred to a heart specialist for further assessment. Treatment depends on what is found during the exam and your specific signs and symptoms.

### **Your exam is scheduled for:**

Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ am pm

Place: \_\_\_\_\_



### **Where can I find more information concerning echocardiograms?**

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/echocardiogram/HB00012>

[http://www.webmd.com/hw/heart\\_disease/hw212692.asp](http://www.webmd.com/hw/heart_disease/hw212692.asp)

**Visit our Website:**

**[www.palmettofamilymed.com](http://www.palmettofamilymed.com)**

# **Echocardiogram**

An Ultra Sound of the Heart



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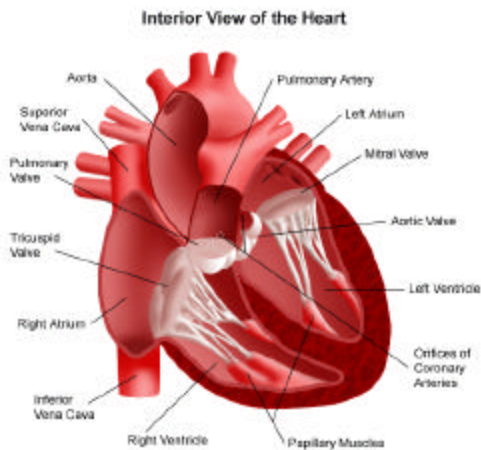
**Fax (803)-256-1994**

## What is an Echocardiogram?

An echocardiogram is a test that uses sound waves to create a moving picture of the heart. The picture is much more detailed than an X-ray image and involves no radiation exposure.

## Why is the Test Performed?

This test is performed to evaluate the valves and chambers of the heart in a noninvasive manner. The echocardiogram allows doctors to evaluate heart murmurs, check the pumping function of the heart, and evaluate patients who have had heart attacks. It is a very good screening test for heart disease in certain groups of patients.



## What to Expect During the Test

You will lie on your back or on your left side on a bed or table. An EKG (electrocardiogram) will be attached to monitor your heart rhythm.

A small amount of gel will be rubbed on the left side of your chest to help pick up the sound waves. A small instrument (transducer) that looks like a microphone is pressed firmly against your chest and moved slowly back and forth. This instrument sends sound waves into the chest and picks up the echoes as they reflect off different parts of the heart. The echoes are sent to a video monitor that records pictures of your heart for later viewing and evaluation. The room is usually darkened to help the technician see the pictures on the monitor.

At times you will be asked to hold very still, breathe in and out very slowly, hold your breath, or lie on your left side. The transducer is usually moved to different areas on your chest that provide specific views of your heart.

The test usually takes from 30 to 60 minutes. When the test is over, the gel is wiped off and the electrodes are removed.

## Information from the Test

- **Heart Size:** Weakened or damaged heart valves, high blood pressure or other diseases can cause the chambers of your heart to enlarge.
- **Pumping Strength:** The test can help your doctor determine your heart's pumping strength. If your heart isn't pumping enough blood to meet your body's needs, heart failure may be a concern.
- **Damage to the Heart Muscle:** Your doctor can determine whether all parts of the heart wall are contributing equally to your heart's pumping activity. Weak activity may indicate coronary artery disease or various other conditions.
- **Valve Problems:** Your doctor can determine if the valves open wide enough for adequate blood flow by watching the valves move as your heart beats.
- **Structural Abnormalities:** Problems can be detected including problems with the heart chambers, abnormal connections between the heart and major vessels, and complex heart defects that are present at birth.