

Transthoracic Echocardiography (Echo, TTE)

An echocardiogram is an ultrasound test of the heart performed by directing high frequency sound waves with a probe across the chest to create an image of the heart on a monitor. It is a painless, non-invasive test used to evaluate the size and structure of the heart, its chambers, and the membrane that surrounds it. The strength or weakness of the heart as well as the competence of the valves that keep blood moving in a forward direction can be determined. An echocardiogram can be used to evaluate the presence of heart defects present from birth or acquired during life.

The test is performed by a qualified technician and reviewed by your physician afterwards. The examination takes about forty-five minutes to complete. You are required to remove your top and any neck jewelry. ECG leads are placed on your chest to monitor your heart rhythm, which can affect the interpretation of the test. A gel is placed on the probe to help conduction of the ultrasound wave. It is typically cold. You may feel the probe against your ribs. From time to time you may be asked to take a breath in and hold it. You may hear the flow of blood as it passes through the heart. Although these sounds are loud and sometimes scary, this is completely normal. Once the test is complete, your doctor will review the images and notify you of the results. It is not the technician's place to give you any results even if preliminary. Rarely additional images will need to be obtained at no additional cost to you. If necessary, we will notify you.

Ultrasound waves are harmless and pose no threat to you even if you are pregnant. It is the same type of test used to look at a baby prior to birth.