



Your child is having an echocardiogram: information for families

An echocardiogram (echo) is one of the most frequently used scans for diagnosing heart problems. An echo is an ultrasound scan of the heart. This information sheet from the Canberra Heart Clinic explains an echocardiogram (Echo), what is involved and what to expect when your child has the scan. An Easy Read information sheet for your child is also enclosed.

An echocardiogram (echo) lets us evaluate the structure, function and blood flow through the heart. Your child will need to lie very still for the scan so it can be helpful to practice doing this at home beforehand.

Are there any alternatives?

While other scans such as x-rays, CT scans and MRI scans can show the structure of your child's heart, an echo is the best way to show it working.

Having an echo can also avoid the need for other diagnostic tests, such as cardiac catheterisation and angiography that are invasive or other scans, such as MRI or CT scans that might need to be carried out under general anaesthetic.

When you receive your appointment letter

If you are unable to keep this appointment, please inform the Canberra Heart Clinic on 02 6162 1886 within 48 hours to avoid a cancellation fee. Sometimes, we can offer the appointment to another child on the waiting list.

The day of the scan

Your child does not need to prepare for the scan, unless it is being carried out under sedation – see our separate information sheet for details.

As the scan is of your child's chest area, it would be helpful if they could wear loose clothes they can take off or undo easily.

Please arrive at the echo department at the time stated in your child's appointment letter.

The scan

You will be able to stay with your child throughout the scan.

They will need to take off their top and lie on a bed next to the echo machine. The scan can last up to 60 minutes and your child will need to lie very still so good quality pictures can be taken.

The paediatric cardiologist or echocardiographer will put some gel on your child's chest area and then use a probe to send and receive ultrasound waves to make a picture. You and your child will be able to see the picture on a screen at the side of the bed.

Are there any risks?

There are no risks associated with an echo scan. The gel used causes no harm, although it may feel a bit cold, and the echo itself is painless with no lasting effects.

After the scan

The paediatric cardiologist or echocardiographer will give you some paper towels so you can rub off the gel. You will then see the paediatric cardiologist. If your child is not having any further tests, you will be free to go home. A letter will be then sent to your child's doctor(s).

Further information

If you have any questions, please telephone the Canberra Heart Clinic on 6162 1886.

Having an echo



You are coming to hospital for an echo (said: eck-o). An echo shows us how blood is flowing through your heart. This helps the doctors decide how to look after you.



Your parents or guardian can come into the room with you. They can stay for the test too.



You will need to take off your top. We will put some jelly on your chest. This will feel a bit cold.



We need you to stay very still while we take the echo pictures. We will put a probe on the jelly to make the pictures. This will not hurt.



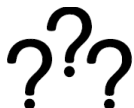
When we have enough pictures, you can move again. We will give you a tissue to wipe off the jelly.



After your echo you and your guardian will then have a discussion with the paediatric cardiologist. If you are not having any other tests, you can go home.



We will send a letter to your doctors.



Please ask us if you have any questions.