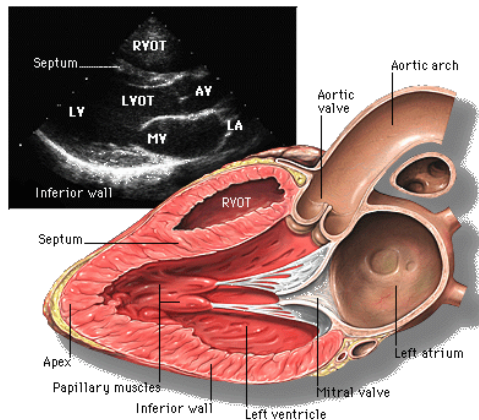


First Coast Cardiovascular Institute



Transthoracic Echocardiogram: (also referred to as a cardiac echo)

An **echocardiogram or ultrasound of the heart** is a graphic outline of the heart's movement. During an echo test, ultrasound (high-frequency sound waves) from a hand-held wand placed on your chest provides pictures of the heart's valves and chambers and helps the sonographer evaluate the pumping action of the heart. Echo is often combined with Doppler ultrasound and color Doppler to evaluate blood flow across the heart's valves.

Purpose:

Echocardiography is used to diagnose cardiovascular diseases. In fact, it is one of the most widely used diagnostic tests for heart disease. It can provide a wealth of helpful information, including the size and shape of the heart, its pumping capacity and the location and extent of any damage to its tissues. It is especially useful for assessing diseases of the heart valves. It not only allows doctors to evaluate the heart valves, but it can detect abnormalities in the pattern of blood flow, such as the backward flow of blood through partly closed heart valves, known as regurgitation. By assessing the motion of the heart wall, echocardiography can help detect the presence and assess the severity of coronary artery disease, as well as help determine whether any chest pain is related to heart disease.

Why is an echocardiogram performed?

- To Assess the overall function of your heart
- Determine the presence of many types of heart disease, such as valve disease, myocardial disease, pericardial disease, infective endocarditis, cardiac masses and congenital heart disease
- Follow the progress of valve disease over time
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your medical or surgical treatments

Can I eat or drink on the day of the test?

Yes. Eat and drink as you normally would the day of the test.

Should I take my medications the day of the test?

Take all of your medications at the usual times, as prescribed by your doctor.

What should I wear on the day of the test?

You may wear anything you like, two piece outfits are preferred. You will be asked to change into a gown before the test.

What to expect?

- Your test will take place in our Echo Lab. Before the test, the cardiac sonographer will explain the procedure. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions.
- You will be given a hospital gown to wear. You'll be asked to remove your clothing from the waist up.
- A cardiac sonographer will place three electrodes (small, flat, sticky patches) on your chest. The electrodes are attached to an electrocardiograph (EKG) monitor that charts your heart's electrical activity during the test.
- The sonographer will ask you to lie on your left side on an exam table. The sonographer will place a wand (called a sound-wave transducer) on several areas of your chest. The wand will have a small amount of warm gel on the end, which will not harm your skin. This gel helps produce clearer pictures.
- Sounds are part of the Doppler signal. You may or may not hear the sounds during the test.
- You may be asked to change positions several times during the exam so the sonographer can take pictures of different areas of the heart. You may also be asked to hold your breath at times.

How will I feel during the test?

You should feel no major discomfort during the test. You may feel warmth on your skin from the gel on the transducer, and a slight pressure of the transducer on your chest. The biggest advantage to echocardiography is that it is noninvasive (doesn't involve breaking the skin or entering body cavities) and has no known risks or side effects.

How long does the test take?

The appointment will take about 45 minutes. After the test, you may get dressed and go home or go to your other scheduled appointments.

How do I get the results of my test?

After a cardiologist has reviewed your test, the results will be entered into your electronic medical record. Your physician will have access to the results and will discuss them with you.