

# What is Echocardiography?

---

Echocardiography, also called an echo test, is a test that takes “moving pictures” of the heart with sound waves. You don’t have to stay in the hospital; it’s not surgery and doesn’t hurt.

This test is done to help your doctor find out if you have problems with your heart or with how it’s working.

---

This test may be needed if...

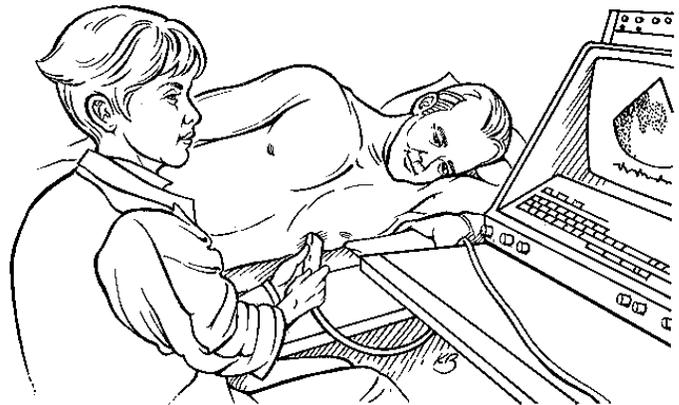
- You have a heart murmur.
- You’ve had a heart attack.
- You have unexplained chest pains.
- You’ve had rheumatic fever.
- You have a congenital heart defect.

## How is it done?

- You’ll lie on a bed on your side or back.
  - A technician will put special jelly on a probe and move it over your chest area.
  - Ultra-high-frequency sound waves will pick up images of your heart and valves. No X-rays will be used.
  - Your heart’s movements can be seen on a video screen.
  - A videotape or a photograph can be made of the pictures.
  - You can watch during the test.
  - It usually takes less than 15–20 minutes.
  - It’s painless and has no side effects.
  - Your doctor will talk to you about the results.
- Sound waves will pick up images as explained above.
  - When the test is finished, the technician will gently pull the probe out.
  - You may feel a need to cough.

Sometimes the probe needs to be closer to your heart to give clearer pictures. You may need a special test called transesophageal echocardiography (TEE).

- As you swallow, a technician will gently pass a tube with a probe on the end of it down your throat and into the esophagus. (This is the tube connecting your mouth to your stomach.)



---

## What will the test show?

- The size and shape of your heart
- How well your heart is working overall
- If a wall or section of heart muscle is weak and not working correctly
- If you have problems with your heart's valves
- If you have a blood clot

---

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
  2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.
  3. For more information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).
- We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.
- Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

---

## What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

### Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

### Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

---

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Will I need more tests?

---

---

---

---

---

---