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# Patient Information

## Exercise Stress Echocardiogram

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## **What is it?**

An echocardiogram or 'echo' is a scan that uses ultrasound (sound waves) to produce pictures of the heart. The test is painless and does not use radiation. During an Exercise Stress Echo, your doctor will ask you to walk on a treadmill or ride an exercise bike, whilst pictures are taken of your heart.

## **Why is being done?**

An Exercise Stress Echo is performed as it allows your doctor to understand how the heart copes when it is made to work harder. An Exercise Stress Echo is useful to diagnose whether you have angina or not. It can also give information about the severity of a heart-valve problem.

## **What does it involve?**

You will be taken into a darkened room. Two people will usually be present when you have the test, cardiology doctor and a cardiac physiologist. You will be asked to undress to the waist. Female patients are given a gown that has openings on the front and side. You will be asked to lie on a couch on your left hand side. Stickers will be attached to your chest and connected to the ultrasound machine. These will be used to monitor your heart rate. Your blood pressure will also be checked regularly throughout the test. A drip will be placed in the vein in your arm, if the doctor needs to inject contrast which improves the quality of the images recorded.

Pictures of your heart will be recorded on the machine. You will then be asked to exercise, either by walking on a treadmill or riding an exercise bike. The exercise will be gentle at first but will get progressively more strenuous. Occasionally the Sonographer may record pictures of your heart whilst you are exercising.

When the Doctor has decided that you have performed enough exercise, or if you are unable to continue, the Doctor will ask you to lie back on the couch and more images of the heart will be recorded. You will continue to have your heart rate and blood pressure monitored until you have fully recovered, which may take several minutes. Overall the Exercise Stress Echo will take around 45 minutes to one hour to complete.

## **Are there any special precautions to take before the exercise echo?**

You should continue medications as usual unless your doctor suggests otherwise.

Have something light to eat and drink before your appointment. Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes. Avoid/minimise smoking 24 hours before.



## After the exercise echocardiogram

You will be able to return home after the test has been completed. You may undertake your day-to-day activities as usual.

## Are there any risks in having the Exercise Echo?

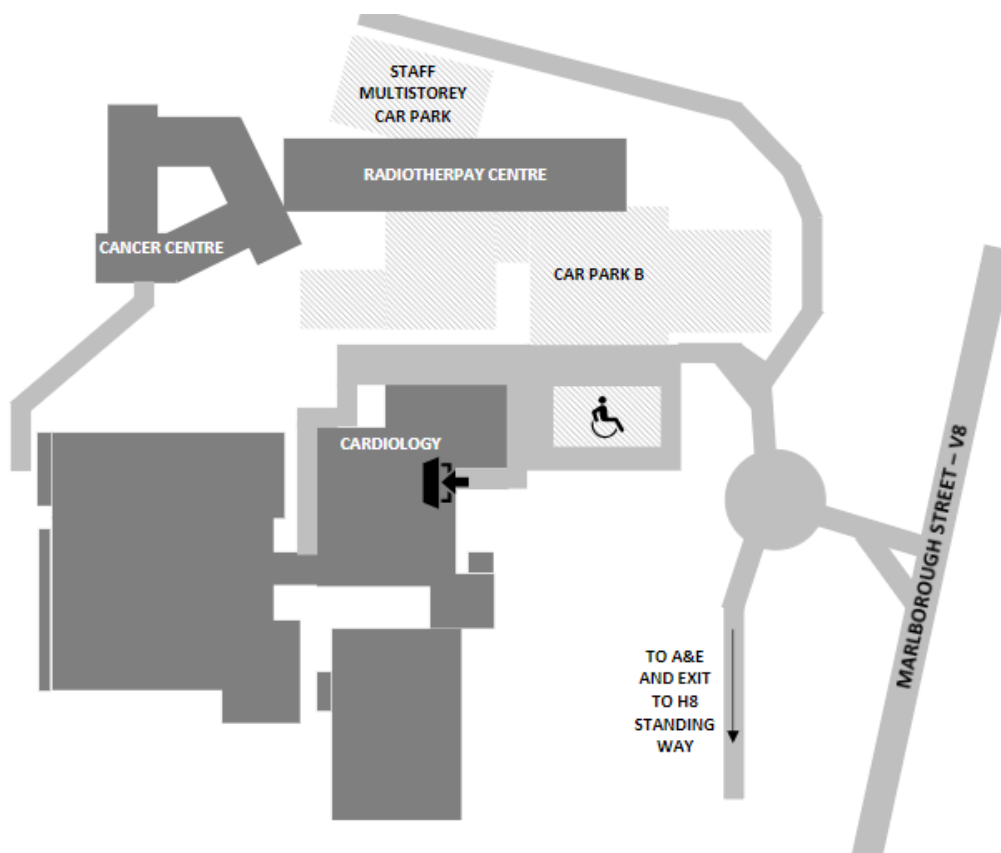
The Exercise Stress Echo scan is generally an extremely safe test. There is however an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) of developing an allergic reaction if contrast is used. If you have had allergic reactions to any medicines before please inform us before starting the test. If you suffer from angina, there is an extremely small risk (less than 1 in 10,000) you may have a small heart attack during the test.

You should be reassured that all those staff undertaking these tests are fully trained in all the procedures necessary to treat any complications.

## Directions

The nearest car park to Cardiology is Car Park B where payment is CARD ONLY upon exit.

Please enter via the Cardiology Reception entrance





## If you have any questions about your Exercise Stress Echocardiogram, please phone:

**Cardiac Catheter Lab**  
**01908 996539**  
**(Monday - Friday 8.00am – 18:00pm)**

### **We encourage patients to be involved in their care by:**

1. Being part of the conversation and shared decision making
2. Asking questions if something is not clear
3. Speaking up if you have concerns

Checks are there to protect you and you can be part of them. Behave with respect and kindness towards healthcare professionals.

We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR. Further guidance can be found within our privacy notice found on our Trust website: [www.mkuh.nhs.uk](http://www.mkuh.nhs.uk)

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**Date published: 06/2024**  
**Date of review: 06/2029**  
**Version No: 2**

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