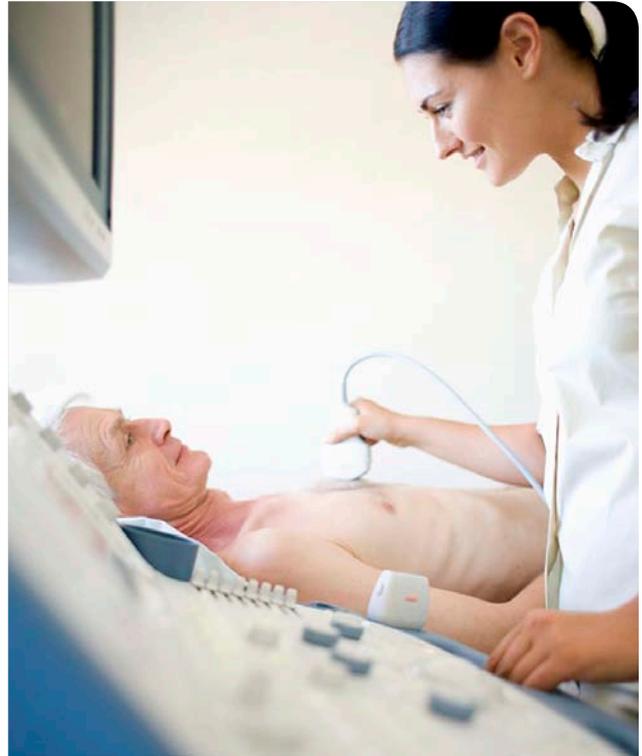




## What Is Echocardiography?

Echocardiography, also called an echo test or heart ultrasound, 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.



Echocardiography is a simple and painless procedure that uses sound waves to take “pictures” of your heart.

### Why do I need an echo test?

Your doctor may use an echo test to look at your heart’s structure and check how well your heart is 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?

Echo tests are done by trained sonographers. You may have your test done in your doctor’s office, an emergency room, an operating room, a hospital clinic or a hospital room.

- You’ll lie on a bed on your left side or back.
- The sonographer 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 sometimes watch during the test.
- It usually takes one hour.
- It’s painless and has no side effects.

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 cardiologist 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.)

*(continued)*



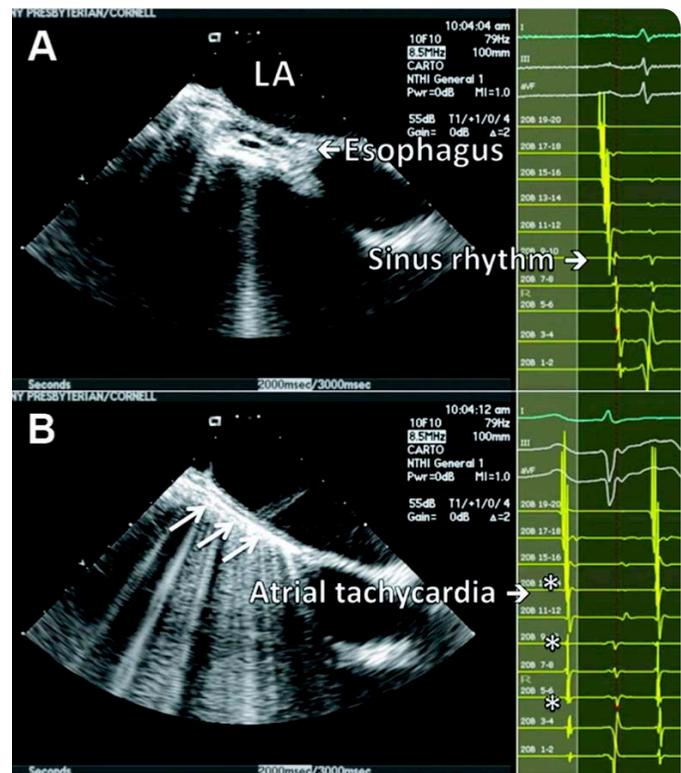
- Sound waves will pick up images as explained above.
- When the test is finished, the cardiologist will gently pull the probe out.
- You may feel a need to cough.

### What can 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

### What happens after the echo?

- Your sonographer will help you clean the gel from your chest.
- Your doctor will talk with you after looking at your echo pictures and discuss what the pictures show.



An example of an echocardiograph

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

## Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**When will I know the results?**

**Will I need more tests?**

## My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.