



Bubble Study – Agitated Saline Contrast Study

A bubble saline contrast echocardiogram is a test often performed to detect a patent foramen ovale (PFO). A PFO is a normal flap valve opening that occurs in the wall (atrial septum) of the heart. It separates the right atrium from the left atrium (the top two heart chambers) while in the womb but usually closes spontaneously (naturally) following birth. In a quarter of people however it stays open and can intermittently allow blood flow to pass from the right atrium to the left atrium.

Alternative reasons to perform this test may include:

- extra communications (small holes) between blood vessels in your lungs (known as pulmonary arterio-venous malformations)
- history of complex heart surgery

The day of the test

- Take all your normal medication
- Eat and drink as normal.
- A Cardiac sonographer or your Cardiologist will explain the test in more detail to ensure any further questions you may have are answered.

The procedure

You will be asked to undress to the waist and then to lie on a bed. A resting echocardiogram will be performed or you may already have had one. This is a safe, non-invasive procedure that uses ultrasound waves to see the heart.

The doctor will insert a thin, plastic tube (a cannula) into a vein in your left arm.

A small sample of your blood will be mixed with a saline solution (sterile salty water) and injected through the thin plastic tube in your arm. You may be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds during the test. The injections will be repeated several times and the whole procedure will last approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

This procedure gives much clearer images of the heart as the saline solution helps enhance the quality of the pictures. These images will be recorded on the machine and reviewed by your doctor.

Following the test your doctor will have a discussion with you about the test results.

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