



Gordon C. Gunn, M.D. Nancy A. Towbin, M.D. Ricarda D. Benz, M.D. Melanie R. Santos, M.D. P.K. Kaliban, PA-C

ECHOCARDIOGRAM

What is an Echocardiogram?

An Echocardiogram (ECHO) is a special non-invasive office ultrasound examination that determines the *health of the heart* by evaluating both its anatomy and function.

Who should have an Echocardiogram?

Individuals of any age who have any of the following:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Heart murmur or other abnormal heart examination finding
- Mitral valve prolapse (MVP)
- Irregular heart rhythm or palpitations
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Ankle swelling
- Dizziness or fainting
- History of diet pill use
- History of congenital heart defects

What information does Echocardiography provide?

An ECHO examination of the heart will measure the following:

- The four heart chambers that receive circulating blood (*atria*) and then pump the blood (*ventricles*) to the lungs and body. Both the size of the chambers and the thickness of the chamber walls are measured. (Note: High blood pressure can cause wall thickening and subsequent weakening of the heart muscle.)
- Pumping function of the heart muscle, while in motion.
- Heart valve structure including prolapse (MVP) or leaking.
- Pressure within the heart and lungs in patients with a history of diet pill use.
- Detects blood clots, masses or infections of the heart.
- Detects inflammation or fluid accumulation around the heart.