

# Fetal Echocardiogram: What to Expect

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## What is a fetal echocardiogram?

A **fetal echocardiogram** is the use of an ultrasound imaging machine to look at an unborn baby's heart (fetal heart) structure and function. It is similar to a routine pregnancy ultrasound.

## How should I prepare?

You do not need to make any special preparations before your fetal echocardiogram. You can eat, drink and take medications as usual. The test does not require a full bladder so you can use the restroom before your appointment.

## What happens during the echocardiogram?

1. The sonographer or nurse will ask you questions related to your health history.
2. You will lie on an exam bed only showing your abdomen (belly). The sonographer applies warm gel to your skin to help the transducer make good contact and to improve the quality of the images.

**Sonographer:** a clinician who specializes in ultrasound technology

**Pediatric Cardiologist:** doctors who have special expertise in the diagnosis and management of problems that affect a baby's heart, before and after birth

You will see different images of your baby's heart and blood vessels on the video screen. You may feel some pressure while the transducer is moving. This portion of the test takes approximately 30 minutes.

3. At the end of the exam, the sonographer reviews the images with the pediatric cardiologist for completeness. They may come back for more images to complement the original images.

### **Who will give me my fetal echocardiogram results?**

The pediatric cardiologist will explain the results, provide recommendations, and answer any questions the same day. If necessary, we will make a plan for follow-up testing and help coordinate additional services and consultations for you.

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