

## **A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO AN ULTRASOUND CONTRAST STUDY**

*What is an ultrasound contrast study?*

An ultrasound of the heart is called an “echocardiogram”. It is done to get pictures of the heart and the areas around the heart. Better pictures are sometimes seen if a material called “contrast” is used during the ultrasound. The contrast can sometimes help see the different parts of the heart in more detail.

*When would contrast be used in an ultrasound?*

Sometimes an ultrasound without contrast does not give a clear picture. It is hard to tell ahead of time who will need contrast and who will not. During the procedure if the picture is not clear it can be hard for the doctor who reads the ultrasound to be certain what is happening in the heart. In that case it is best to use a contrast to get a better picture.

*How is a contrast study performed?*

There are several different kinds of contrast. You will need to have an intravenous line (IV) and then a doctor or a nurse will put the contrast into the IV. The echocardiogram will be done while the contrast is being put in.

*Is a contrast study safe?*

Contrast studies are very safe. The contrast has been used for many years and in hundreds of thousands of patients with almost no serious effects. Sometimes patients (less than 5%) experience back pain, headache, and blurry vision. These effects are temporary and do not last.

*I have an allergy to contrast dye. Will ultrasound contrast be a problem?*

No. Ultrasound contrast is a completely different type of contrast and is not related to contrast dye that is used in other tests.

Developed: 2/15/03

Revised: 4/27/06