



HEART TESTS

General

Sometimes normal changes that help your body adapt to pregnancy can produce symptoms or signs that are very similar to those of heart disease. For this reason, your specialist will arrange for some “routine” tests throughout your pregnancy to look at heart structure, function, and/or rhythm. Should you develop changes that worry you or your doctor, these tests might be repeated during the pregnancy or other tests may be organized. Your doctor should explain to you the purpose and safety, for you and your baby, of all cardiac tests organized during your pregnancy.

Tests which may be organized during pregnancy

Electrocardiography (ECG): The ECG provides information about your heart rate and rhythm over a few seconds. You will likely have at least one ECG during your pregnancy. This test is safe for both you and your baby.

Ambulatory electrocardiography monitoring: The Holter monitor provides information about heart rate and rhythm over one or more days. The event monitor provides similar information over a few weeks. These tests are safe for both you and your baby.

Echocardiography (for the mother): The echocardiogram, or ultrasound of your heart, provides information about the structure and function of your heart. You will likely have two or more echocardiograms during your pregnancy. This test is safe for both you and your baby.

Echocardiography (for the fetus): The echocardiogram for the fetus is generally performed halfway through pregnancy. This study can diagnose major structural and/or functional heart problems in your baby. This test is safe for the baby.

Additional Tests

Cardiac catheterization: A cardiac catheterization provides important information about the coronary arteries and about blood flow through the heart (pressures, amount of flow, and oxygen levels). A catheterization may be performed during your pregnancy if your doctor thinks that there is important information to be obtained that cannot be obtained from other studies. Your doctor should explain to you in detail the benefits and risks of this test.

Cardiac computed tomography (CT): A cardiac CT provides detailed information about heart structure and may provide important information about the coronary arteries and aorta. A cardiac CT may be performed during your pregnancy if your doctor thinks that there is important information to be obtained that cannot be obtained from other studies. Your doctor should explain to you in detail the benefits and risks of this test.

Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI): A cardiac MRI provides detailed information about heart structure and blood flow through the heart. A cardiac MRI may be performed during your pregnancy if

your doctor thinks that there is important information to be obtained that cannot be obtained from other studies. Your doctor should explain to you in detail the benefits and risks of this test.