

Health Bulletin



A Three-Dimensional Image Of Heart Health

(NAPSA)—A technology known for providing images of babies before they are born—an ultrasound—is also making a contribution to heart health.

Even though over 20 million heart ultrasounds are performed annually in the U.S., some people are still unaware of the benefits the technology can offer.

Heart ultrasound can provide a visual image of a beating heart and circulation in real time. In fact, the latest heart ultrasound technologies can provide three-dimensional and four-dimensional images.

Heart ultrasounds can help reveal:

- The extent of damage following a heart attack
- Whether fluid is collecting around the heart
- The presence of abnormalities in the structure of the heart
- The efficiency of the heart in pumping blood to the rest of the body.

According to the American Society of Echocardiography, those with a family history of heart disease, a heart murmur, unexplained chest or upper arm pain, or a previous history of heart disease may want to ask their doctor if they need a heart ultrasound.

When heart ultrasound is combined with a stress test, the heart can be visualized before and after exercise. In this way, tight blockages (plaque) in the arteries of the heart can be detected. This is important because plaque in the arteries can often lead to angina or heart attacks.

Heart ultrasounds can also be useful for people who have been treated for cancer, diabetes and other conditions that may weaken the heart.

The exam usually lasts 30-60



A heart ultrasound can provide a detailed visual image of the beating heart and circulation in real time.

minutes and the most common type is completely noninvasive. Often, heart ultrasounds can be performed in a doctor's office or a lab. Given that some cardiac ultrasound machines are portable, the exam can be performed even on elderly patients with limited mobility.

Experts say there are important things to remember when considering having the exam:

- You should talk to your physician first. Only a doctor can order a heart ultrasound.
- Check to see if your heart ultrasound will be performed by a registered sonographer in an ICAEL-accredited lab.

Having a trained sonographer performing the study and a cardiologist who specializes in heart ultrasound (echocardiographer) reading the study is essential to assure that the test is performed and interpreted in the most accurate way possible.

For more information, contact the American Society of Echocardiography at SeeMyHeart.org.

Note to Editors: October is Ultrasound Awareness Month.