What is a "Bubble 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. One type of contrast is saline (sterile salt water). When saline is used, it is called a "Bubble Study". During a Bubble Study, the nurse will agitate the salt water until it forms small bubbles. The bubbles are then injected into the vein through an intravenous line (IV). In a normal heart, the bubbles are filtered by the lungs and are seen only on the right side of the heart. If the bubbles are seen on the left side, it shows that there is an opening or hole between the two upper or lower chambers of the heart, which is abnormal. The Bubble Study helps to identify those abnormalities.

Why would a Bubble Study be done?
Your doctor may ask to have a Bubble Study when the Echocardiogram ("Echo") test is ordered. It can be especially helpful if someone has had a stroke or what is called a "mini-stroke" which is also called a Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA).

How do I prepare for a Bubble Study?
No preparation is needed.

What can I expect during the Bubble Study?
An intravenous line (IV) is placed in your arm or hand.
Electrodes/patches and sensors are placed on your chest and trunk of your body.
A complete ultrasound exam of the heart is performed.
Sterile saline (salt water) is agitated in a syringe attached to the IV and then injected into the IV while the ultrasound is done.

Is a Bubble Study safe?
The bubble study is extremely safe. There is a small risk of bruising from the placement of the IV line.

How will I know the results of the test?
Final interpretation of the test results are completed by your cardiologist. You will obtain your results at your next follow-up visit with your cardiologist. Prior to leaving our office, please make sure you have a follow-up appointment for test results.

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