

## RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE SCREENING

### **Q** What is rheumatic heart disease screening?

**A** Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) screening is a quick way to look at the heart using a heart scan called an echocardiogram or echo. It looks at the heart to see if there is any sign of rheumatic heart disease.

### **Q** Why is the rheumatic heart disease screening coming to our community?

**A** As there is high amount of scabies in community, there are concerns about acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease. A heart scan will identify missed rheumatic heart disease in the community providing opportunity for early treatment.

### **Q** Who is eligible for an echo?

**A** Any person aged between 5–20 years who lives in the Cherbourg and Murgon area will be eligible to have an echo under this program.

### **Q** Do I have to have an echo?

**A** The screening program will be offered to anyone between 5–20 years but will only be done with consent.

### **Q** What does having an echo involve?

**A** To have the echo, you will need to take your shirt off. A gown will be given to you to protect your modesty. Ultrasound gel will be put on your chest and the screening will use an ultrasound machine to look at your heart. This is not painful and will take 5-10 minutes.

### **Q** What is the echo looking for?

**A** The echo is looking for any signs of rheumatic heart disease. This may be signs like the heart not pumping as well as it should or problems with the heart valves.

### **Q** Can we screen for rheumatic heart disease any other way?

**A** No, there are no other tests that can diagnose rheumatic heart disease. The echo is the best test to check for rheumatic heart disease.

### **Q** Can my family come with me?

**A** Parents or family members are welcome to come with you when you have the echo if you would prefer. For any female over 8, a female chaperone will be available to be with you during the scan.



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## Q What are the potential benefits of having an echo?

**A** The main benefit of echo screening is that it provides an opportunity to STOP rheumatic heart disease. Screening helps to find people with rheumatic heart disease who don't know that they have it, so that they can be treated with antibiotics to prevent episodes of acute rheumatic fever leading to further heart damage.

## Q What are the risks or potential harms of getting an echo done?

**A** An echo is a safe and non-invasive test. It uses ultrasound to look at the heart.

No screening test is perfect. Sometimes a test result will say there is a problem when the person does not have rheumatic heart disease. This will understandably cause parents and children to worry about the result. That is why we will arrange to do a more detailed scan of the heart if the screening echo is borderline or abnormal.

## Q Do I need to do anything before the test?

**A** You can eat and drink and take any of your usual medications before the test.

## Q What do I need to bring with me?

**A** You will need to bring your consent form signed by yourself (if you are over 16) or your parents. You can bring a family member or parent if you would like. There is nothing else you need to bring.

## Q Will there be a cost?

**A** No, the screening will be provided for free.

## Q Why do I have to have this if I don't have any symptoms?

**A** You can have rheumatic heart disease without having any obvious symptoms. Even if you don't have symptoms, it can still cause problems later or get worse without appropriate treatment, which is why we are recommending screening for anyone aged between 5–20 years.

## Q What happens if I am away during the program?

**A** The staff will only be available in the community during the program so it will not be possible to come back another day to have the test. We encourage everyone to come to the heart scan clinics when the Healthy Skin Healthy Heart mob are in community.

## Q What will happen with the results?

**A** You will be contacted by either your GP, local doctor or the public health unit with the results, about two weeks after your scan.

If the result is normal, we will send the result by letter to yourself and your doctor. If the result is not normal, we will contact you to explain the results.

## Q What happens if I have a borderline or abnormal rheumatic heart disease screening result?

**A** If you have a borderline or abnormal screening echo, we will organise a more detailed scan of your heart and a review with a heart doctor (cardiologist). We will also recommend antibiotic treatment (LA Bicillin®) every four weeks until you see a heart doctor for your diagnosis.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Darling Downs Health Public Health Unit on 07 4699 8240.



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