

Illinois Heart & Lung Associates - Patient Services

Carotid Doppler

What is a Carotid Doppler Exam?

A Carotid Doppler exam is an ultrasound examination of the carotid arteries in your neck. The Doppler ultrasound uses sound waves to create images and sounds of your blood flow. The test can detect narrowed or blocked arteries, or blood clots in the veins. A hand-held probe placed against the skin emits sound waves. The sound waves bounce off the moving blood and echo back to the probe. The echo is translated into an image that appears on a screen. This test involves no radiation and is harmless.



Before Your Test

This test requires little effort to prepare for. You may be asked to undress from the waist down, keeping your underwear on. Or, you may be asked to change into a gown. The test takes approximately 45-60 minutes and is painless. You will be able to drive home afterward.

It is important for you to notify the sonographer if you have had a stroke or experienced short-term loss of strength, speech, or vision.

During Your Test

You will lie down on an exam table. If the test is done on your neck, your head will be turned to the side, as if you were looking over your shoulder. Non-greasy gel will be applied to your neck. The sonographer will then press a hand-held transducer (probe) against your neck. The gel may feel wet, don't worry it won't harm your skin or clothes.

You may hear a "whooshing" noise during the test. This is the sound of your blood flowing. The sonographer can answer questions regarding the test, but only a doctor can explain the results.

After Your Test

The data obtained from the exam will allow your doctor to see if there is any plaque in the artery, and to determine the restriction (if any) of blood flow. Your doctor will notify you with the test results.