

Exercise Echocardiogram

An exercise echocardiogram (echo) combines an exercise stress test with an echo. An exercise echo helps your doctor learn more about how your heart works when it is stressed. As you walk on a treadmill, we closely monitor your heart activity.

Getting Ready for a Stress Echo

- Do not eat or drink for 4 hours. If you have diabetes, let your doctor know since you may need special instructions. You can bring a snack to eat once you are done with the procedure.
- If you take heart medicines, let your doctor know when you schedule the test. You may be asked to stop taking some of these medicines ahead of time.
- Wear comfortable clothing and walking shoes. You will be asked to undress from the waist up.
- Before the test, details of the procedure and its risks and benefits will be explained to you. Plan to sign a consent form. If you have ANY questions, please ask.

What to Expect During Your Exercise Echo

When you arrive, you will remove your clothes from the waist up and change into a hospital gown. Sticky patches (electrodes) will be placed on your chest to monitor your heart.

First, you will have a brief **resting echo**. You will be asked to lie on an exam table. Gel will be applied to a small microphone-like device called a transducer. The technologist sonographer then gently moves the transducer over the chest to capture images of the heart. You may notice these images on a nearby screen. To improve the quality of the images, you may be asked to breathe slowly or hold your breath.

Second, you will have an **exercise test**. You will be asked to walk on a treadmill. You start slowly with a slow increase in the speed and angle or incline of the treadmill. You will be asked to continue walking as long as possible. During the exercise test, it is common to feel your heart beat, breathing increase, and leg muscles tire. Be sure to let the staff know if you feel chest or arm pain, shortness of breath, leg fatigue, or dizziness. Throughout the test, staff will keep a close eye on your heart rhythm, blood pressure, and symptoms.

Third, an **after-exercise echo** is performed. When you are done on the treadmill, you will be assisted back onto the exam table. The technologist sonographer will record a second set of images.

Risks	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The echo is safe. There are no known risks. • The exercise test has a small amount of risk because we stress the heart. It is rare, but you could have abnormal heart rhythms or a heart attack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We try to determine if you have any blockages in your coronary arteries. • We learn about your exercise ability and any symptoms related to the level of your exercise. • Your doctor is able to make a diagnosis and treatment plan.

After the test, the doctors evaluate your ECG and exercise performance. They also compare the images from the resting echo to the after-exercise echo to see how your heart works under stress. In a healthy heart, all areas of the heart pump harder during stress. If an area of the heart does not pump as well during the stress test, this means there may be a narrowed or blocked artery preventing the heart muscle from getting enough blood to function properly. If this is the case, you may need to have further tests.

Expect the entire test to take 1 hour.

Results

Your doctor will receive a written report and talk with you about the final results.

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #6137s