

Exercise Stress Test

What is an exercise stress test?

This test is done while you walk on a treadmill or pedal a stationary bike. It allows doctors to see how the heart functions when it is working harder. This test will help detect **coronary heart disease**. This is caused by blockages in the arteries of the heart. These are the blood vessels that supply oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle.

Getting Ready for the Test

- **Do not** eat or drink for 4 hours before the test. You can have water until 2 hours before. This will help prevent you from feeling sick to your stomach.
- If you are diabetic, be sure to ask your doctor for special instructions.
- **No caffeine** 12 hours before the test.
- **Do not** smoke for at least 3 hours before the test.
- If you are taking any heart medicine, check with your doctor. They may have you stop certain medicines a day or two before the test. This can help get better test results.
- Avoid any hard exercise on the day of the test.
- Wear loose clothing that you can move in. Men often do not wear a shirt during the test. Women wear a loose-fitting blouse or hospital gown.
- Wear walking shoes or sneakers that fit well.

Several electrodes (small sticky patches) will be placed on your chest to obtain an electrocardiogram (ECG). This is a record of the heart's electrical activity. In order to obtain a good connection with the

electrodes, your skin will be cleaned with alcohol pads. Your skin may be sore after the test. This should go away in a day or two. Men may need to have part of their chest shaved to be sure the test results are correct.

Before the test, you will be told how the test will be done. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. Ask any questions you may have about the test.

Exercise Test

After a brief exam, you will exercise by walking on a treadmill or pedaling a bike. This will begin slow and easy. It will slowly become harder.

You will need to report any symptoms, such as chest or arm pain, shortness of breath, leg fatigue, or dizziness. The person doing the test will decide when to end the test. This will be when your heart beats at the target rate, when you get too tired, or if you have any problems.

The exercise part of the test takes 5 to 15 minutes. The test will take about an hour, which includes prep, exercise, and recovery period.

Results

Your doctor will talk to you about the test results during a future office visit or by phone. The results of this test will help your doctor know how your heart is working so they can come up with a treatment plan.

Who to Call

Cardiovascular Imaging Lab
(608) 263-9014