

Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Stress Test

This cardiac (heart) stress test looks for blockages of the blood supply to the heart. The cardiac stress test is done in three parts. First, you will have resting pictures taken of your heart, then a stress test, and finally a second set of pictures of your heart. It takes about 3 hours to complete this test. Results will be sent to the provider who ordered your test. It may take a few days for them to contact you.

The Resting Test

We will take resting pictures of your heart. We will compare these pictures to the pictures we take after the stress test.

You will have an IV line in your arm. We will use this line to inject a radioactive substance that will help us see pictures of your heart. We will take pictures 30 minutes later.

You will lie flat on a table with both arms raised above your head and remain still while the scanner moves slowly around your chest. During the final minutes of the scan, the table will slide you a few feet further into the scanner for a short CT scan that will define body structures. This helps the doctors read your scan.

If you are claustrophobic, please ask the provider who referred you for the test if you need medicines to help you relax.

The Stress Test

There are two ways the “stress” portion of the test can be done.

1. If you can walk about five blocks without pain, your heart can be stressed by walking on a treadmill. This workout will start out easy and slowly get harder until you reach

your maximum effort. This is known as a treadmill stress test.

2. If you cannot walk far, we can give you medicine to “stress” the heart. We will inject this through an IV. This is known as a drug stress test. You could also have a combined drug and treadmill stress test. You will have mild side effects from this drug. These effects will go away after several minutes.

You will have small sticky pads placed on your chest. These pads will be attached to an ECG monitor, so we can closely watch your heart rate and rhythm during the test.

During the test, let us know if you have:

- Chest or arm discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness

We will inject another dose of the radioactive substance through the IV line about 1 ½ minutes before the end of the stress test.

The Final Test

We will take a second set of pictures about 30 minutes after your stress test.

Getting Ready

Starting four hours before your test, stop eating. You may have water up until two hours before your test. Do not eat or drink anything after that.

If you take insulin, talk to your doctor or clinic to change your dose for the day. If your drive is longer than three hours, you can have a light breakfast of juice and toast before leaving home. If you use a blood sugar meter, please bring it with you.

No caffeine 12 hours before the test. This includes caffeinated and decaf coffee, tea, chocolate, sodas with caffeine, and some medicines that have caffeine.

Wear or bring pants or shorts that are easy to move in and shoes that are good for walking.

Contact your doctor with questions about any medicine you are on for your heart or blood pressure. Your doctor decides if you need to stop any medicines before the test. **If you were told not to take certain medicines, bring them with you, and take them after the test.** If you've had changes to your medicines, please bring a list of these medicines. If you will be taking medicine during the four hours before the test, you can have a small amount of water.

You will need to sign a consent form for the exercise stress test. This is to ensure you understand any risks of doing a stress test.

Locations

Your test will be done at either the University Hospital at 600 Highland Ave, or at The American Center at 4602 Eastpark Blvd. Your provider should tell you where your test will be done.

Who to Call

Nuclear Medicine
(608) 263-9729

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**. Ask for Nuclear Medicine at University Hospital.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4585