

Dobutamine Stress Echo

A dobutamine stress echocardiogram combines a stress test with an echocardiogram. A stress echo shows us how well your heart works when it is stressed. For people who cannot walk well, we give a drug called dobutamine. This makes the heart work harder and faster.

Getting Ready for a Dobutamine Stress Echo

- Do not eat or drink for 4 hours. If you have diabetes, let your doctor know. You may need special instructions.
- If you take heart medicines, let your doctor know when you schedule the test. You may be asked to stop taking some of these drugs ahead of time.
- Be sure to wear a 2-piece outfit. 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.

Risks of Procedure

- The echo is very safe. There are no known risks.
- The dobutamine test has a small amount of risk because we stress the heart. It is rare. You could have abnormal heart rhythms, low blood pressure, or a heart attack.

Benefits of Procedure

- To determine if you have any blockages in your coronary arteries.
- Dobutamine helps us to study your heart even if you are not able to walk on treadmill.
- Your doctor can make a more accurate diagnosis and treatment plan.

What to Expect During Your Dobutamine Stress Echo

When you arrive, you will change into a hospital gown. An IV (a small intravenous tube) will be placed into a vein in your arm. Sticky patches (electrodes) will be placed on your chest to monitor your heartbeat.

First, you will have a **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 sonographer 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.

Next, small amounts of **dobutamine** are given very slowly through the IV. As the drug is given, it's common to feel your heart pound. Throughout the procedure, we keep a close eye on your heart rhythm, blood pressure, and symptoms. Some people feel chest discomfort, headache, dizziness, nausea, or shortness of breath.

If you feel any of these symptoms, please let us know right away. When the dobutamine is stopped, the symptoms go away quickly. In about 10 minutes, all the dobutamine is out of your body.

When the drug is given, the sonographer will record more images of your heart. The doctors then compare the images 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 tells us that there may be a narrowed or blocked artery.

The blockage prevents the heart muscle from getting enough blood to function as it should. 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 results.

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 ©5/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6136.