

Exercise Treadmill Test

Patient Education

A cardiac stress test, also called exercise test or a treadmill test, may help your technician see how well your heart works during exercise. Exercise is a form of body stress. The longer you exercise, the harder your body needs to work. The heart must work double time to pump more blood to supply the body with more oxygen. A cardiac stress test may check for risks of a possible heart problem or diagnose an existing heart problem. It will also tell technicians the type and level of exercise that will be best for you.

During a cardiac stress test, you will be asked to walk or jog on a treadmill. While doing this, your heart will be watched on a monitor. Your technician will be watching you during this test. Your breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate are also checked while you are exercising. You may get tired, have trouble breathing, or start having chest pains while doing the test. Your technician may give you medicines or ask you not to continue doing the test

During your test, an electrocardiogram (ECG) is used to record tracings of your heart activity. Electrodes (sticky patches) are put on your chest and attached to the electrocardiogram (ECG) monitor and recorder. A baseline ECG is then recorded on paper. Additional recordings are made during and following exercise. A blood pressure cuff will be placed on your arm to monitor your blood pressure during the test. You are asked to start mild exercise on the treadmill. The exercise gets harder as the test progresses.

During the test, your heart rhythm is always shown on a heart monitor. This allows your technician to watch out for ECG changes and arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats). When you reach your highest exercise level, your technician will ask you to slow your exercise. The test is continued until you reach a target heart rate. It may be stopped early if you develop symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, weakness, tiredness, or dizziness. More ECG recordings are done after you stopped exercising. The electrodes are removed from your chest after the test is done. After the test, you will be monitored until your ECG returns to normal, your heart rate returns to normal and your breathing returns to normal.

A cardiac stress test has risks. Problems can happen during or after the test. Your blood pressure may decrease, and you may feel dizzy, lightheaded, and weak. You may feel your heart throbbing or have extra heartbeats. You may experience chest pain, or in very rare cases, have a heart attack. Technicians are there before, during, and after the test to help you. Do not hesitate to call your technician if you are worried or have questions about the test, your medicine or care.

You are asked to sign a consent form that gives technicians permission to do certain tests, treatments, or procedures. If you are unable to give your consent, someone who has permission can sign this form for you. A consent form is a legal piece of paper that

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tells exactly what will be done to you. Before giving your consent, make sure all your questions have been answered so that you understand what may happen.

The exam will last about an hour. There is some preparation for this test. You will need to wear appropriate clothing and shoes that will allow you to walk/jog on the treadmill.

Please do not eat 1 hour prior to the test to avoid any discomfort while you exercise.

Please do not wear any lotions on your torso to allow for the electrodes to stick to your skin better. You will also need to hold any beta blockers for 24 hours prior to your test,

which include:

Atenolol/Tenormin
Toprol/Metoprolol/Lopressor
Propranolol/Inderal
Sotalol/Betapace
Bisoprolol/Zebeta/Ziac
Nadolol/Corgard/Corzide
Carvedilol/Coreg
Timolol/Blocadren/Timolide
Labetalol Normodyne
Betaxolol/Kerlone
Nebivolol/Bystolic
Verapamil/Calan/Verelan
Diltiazem/Cardizem

It is important that you communicate with your technician at all times during the test and let them know if you are experiencing any symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, leg pain, dizziness, or fatigue.