

EXERCISE STRESS TEST

What is an exercise stress test?

- A stress test allows the doctor to learn how well your heart functions with activity
- A stress test can detect heart problems that may not be present at rest
- An electrocardiogram, also known as and ECG or EKG, records the electrical activity of your heart while you walk on a treadmill or pedal a stationary bicycle.

Why has your doctor has ordered a stress test?

- Identify cause of chest pain, which can occur with blockages in blood flow to heart
- Monitor heart function of people with known heart disease
- Determine response to treatments and medications
- Look for abnormal heart rhythms that may occur with exercise
- Determine an exercise prescription for you

What information is obtained during a stress test?

- Length of time that you were able to exercise
- Onset of symptoms, such as chest pain or pressure, jaw pain or arm pain, or extreme short of breath with exercise
- Response of heart rate and blood pressure to exercise

How do I prepare for a stress test?

- Do not eat a heavy meal 2 hours prior to your test
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine 12 hours prior to your test
- Take your medications on the day of the test unless otherwise instructed
- Do not apply lotions or powders to the chest
- Avoid heavy activity on day of the test
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and walking shoes

What happens during the stress test?

- You will be given an explanation of the test and asked to sign a consent form
- Electrodes are placed on your chest and connected to an electrocardiogram (ECG) machine, which permits continuous monitoring of your heart rhythm
- A nurse or exercise physiologist supervises your test
- You will be shown how to use the treadmill or bicycle
- Treadmill starts slowly at first and gradually increases in speed and incline. A bicycle stress test may feel easy to pedal at first and then gets gradually harder
- Your blood pressure is checked frequently, and your ECG is continually monitored

- Report any symptoms, such as chest pain, shortness of breath, or dizziness
- Exercise as long as you can since that increases the accuracy of the test
- When the exercise portion is completed, your blood pressure and ECG will be monitored for several more minutes

When will I know the results of the stress test?

- Final interpretation of the test results is completed by the cardiologist
- Your referring physician or family doctor receive a report within 3 days