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## Exercise Stress Echocardiogram

### What is an Exercise Stress Echocardiogram?

Stress echocardiography is a test that uses ultrasound imaging to show how well your heart muscles are working to pump blood to your body when your heart rate is increased. This test is mainly used to detect a decrease in blood flow to the heart muscles caused by coronary artery disease.

### How is the test performed?

A resting echocardiogram will be done first. While you lie on your left side, a small device called a transducer is held against your chest. A special gel is used to help the ultrasound waves get to your heart to make an image.

Your heart rate and rhythm (ECG) as well as blood pressure will be monitored throughout the procedure.

You will walk on a treadmill. Roughly every 3 minutes, you will be asked to walk faster and on an incline. It will feel like walking quickly or jogging up a slight hill. This process will continue for around 5 to 10 minutes.

The doctor will ask you to stop:

- When your heart rate is beating at the target rate
- When you are too tired to continue
- If you are having any chest pain or an excessive change in blood pressure

More echocardiogram images will be taken when your heart rate reaches its maximum. These images will show whether any parts of the heart muscle are not functioning properly when your heart rate is increased. This could be a sign that part of the heart may not be receiving enough blood or oxygen due to narrowed or blocked arteries.

### How should I prepare for the test?

Please bring a list of your current medications.

Please refrain from eating, smoking, or drinking beverages containing caffeine or alcohol for **2 hours** prior to the test. Wear comfortable shoes and loose clothing suitable for exercise. The electrodes will be placed on your chest, so you will be required to remove all clothing from the waist up. A gown will be supplied to allow you to cover up.



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Electrodes (small conductive stickers) will be placed on your chest to measure your heart rate and rhythm. Preparation for these stickers involves wiping the area down with alcohol and using a small patch of sandpaper to lightly brush off any soap or cream. This may cause some mild burning or tingling.

A blood pressure cuff on your upper arm will be inflated every 3-5 minutes which may feel tight.

The ultrasound transducer on the chest may be applied with slight pressure which may cause discomfort for some patients.

While walking on the treadmill, some patients experience:

- Chest discomfort
- Dizziness
- Palpitations
- Shortness of breath
- Leg discomfort

If at any time you feel excessive discomfort, the test will be terminated.

### **Why did my doctor ask for this test?**

Your doctor is concerned that your heart muscle may not be getting enough blood flow and/or oxygen when it is under stress (working hard). They may have ordered this test if you:

- Have new symptoms of angina or chest pain
- Have angina that is getting worse
- Have recently had a heart attack
- Have had a stress test with unclear results
- Have heart valve problems
- Have a strong family history of heart disease

The results of this test can help your doctor:

- Determine how well a heart treatment is working, or change treatment if needed
- Determine how well your heart is pumping
- Diagnose coronary artery disease