



## What to Expect During a Nuclear Stress Test

**Your physician has ordered a nuclear stress test and you may be wondering what to expect. The below information will provide you with an overview of the test and hopefully answer any questions you may have and reduce any feelings of anxiety you may have as well.**

### **What is a nuclear stress test?**

It is a diagnostic test used to assess the perfusion (or passage) of the blood through the coronary arteries to the heart muscle.

### **Why did my doctor order this test?**

Cardiologists order these tests for patients who are actively having cardiac symptoms, or for patients who are at high risk for cardiovascular disease.

Images are taken with a Gamma (SPECT) camera with the heart at rest and after the heart has been stressed through exercise, or a pharmacological agent. The images show whether the coronary arteries have any occlusions (plaque buildup).

### **How long will the test take, and can I bring someone with me?**

The full test can take up to 3 hours. During COVID we must limit guests in our office and have limited waiting space during the test. It is preferred that you do not bring a guest unless medically necessary for support or translation assistance for this reason.

### **Are there any special instructions for this test?**

You should avoid caffeine and certain medications. You will be provided a list of instructions to follow. Please let our staff know prior to the day of your test if you have any questions or concerns. We are happy to help make sure you understand and have your questions answered.

We recommend you bring a snack with you. The staff will let you know when it is ok to eat and to have some coffee or caffeine. You may also want to bring a blanket or sweater as it does get chilly.

### **What will happen on the day of my appointment?**

You will check-in for your test downstairs in suite 100. A member of our nuclear testing team will then escort you to the nuclear testing area and will explain the test in more detail. The technician will insert an IV. You can expect to wait about 15-30 minutes after the IV is completed before being placed under the camera to begin 15 minutes of resting images.

After the resting images are taken, you will then start the stress portion of the test on the Treadmill to achieve a target heart rate based on maximum heart rate and age. Once you have achieved your target heart rate, our Nuclear Technician injects the second tracer for the stress images. Additional staff will evaluate the EKG rhythm looking for any changes that could show possible occlusion or risk of a myocardial infarction.

If you are unable to walk on the treadmill due to musculoskeletal issues (or other reasons identified by the physician), the staff will utilize the pharmacological agent Lexiscan which vasodilates all the vessels in the body including the coronary arteries, just like exercise would.

Once you finish the stress portion of the test, you will have the opportunity to eat a snack and have some coffee or caffeine if you like. We encourage you to bring a snack and your favorite beverage with you on the day of your test.

You will complete a second set of images. The technician will review these with you prior to you leaving in case we need to complete any further imaging.

**Our friendly, experienced, and knowledgeable staff is happy to answer any questions or address any concerns you have throughout your test in our office. The technician will alert a cardiologist if there is any concern with your test prior to your exiting the building. Please do not hesitate to ask, we love to educate!**