

Stress Test Protocol

Why is it done?

- An exercise stress test is primarily done to determine if your heart receives enough oxygen and proper blood flow when it needs it most, such as when you are exercising. The test will help your doctor find out how well your heart handles its workload.
- As your body works harder during the test, it requires more fuel and your heart must pump more blood. The test can show if there is a lack of blood supply through the arteries that go to the heart. It can be ordered for people who are experiencing chest pains or other symptoms of coronary heart disease.
- This test will help know the kind of physical activity that's right for you before administering an exercise prescription.

How do you prepare?

- Do not eat or drink for three hours prior to the procedure. Drinking water is okay. This reduces the likelihood of nausea that may accompany strenuous exercise after a heavy meal.
- Please skip the caffeine, try to avoid caffeinated drinks and over-the-counter medication that contain caffeine, such as diet pills or headache medicine within 24hrs of your test.
- Diabetics, particularly those who use insulin, will need special instructions from the physician's office.
- Specific heart medicines may need to be stopped one day prior to the test. It will be important to skip the beta blockers for high blood pressure and congestive heart failure, certain calcium channel blockers that also treat high blood pressure, and nitroglycerin medications that increase blood flow to the heart. This protocol will be discussed by the Physician prior to the test.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing that is suitable for exercise. Men usually don't wear a shirt during the test, and women generally wear a bra and a lightweight blouse or hospital gown. You may choose to wear loose layers and take off certain pieces to your comfort level. You should also wear comfortable walking shoes or sneakers.
- If you use an inhaler for asthma or other breathing problems, bring it with you to the test. Make sure your doctor and the health care team member monitoring your stress test know that you use an inhaler.

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What you can expect?

A patient should allow approximately one hour for the entire test, including the preparation.

- The exercise physiologist or trained medical staff member will place sticky patches (electrodes) which are connected by wires to an electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) machine on your chest, and above your pelvis. A cuff on your arm checks your blood pressure during the activity.
- You will begin walking on the treadmill, as the test progresses the speed and incline of the treadmill increase. You can use the railing on the treadmill for balance.
- You will continue exercising until your heart rate has reached a set target or until you develop symptoms that don't allow you to continue.
- If you feel chest pain at any point of the exam or prior to the exam, please inform the Doctor, Exercise Physiologist, trained medical staff member or member of the health care team.
- There will be three phases, the pre-test, test, and recovery. At any point, you are entitled to terminate the test and will go into recovery mode.

My Questions: (Please write any questions you would like the Doctor or Exercise Physiologist to answer prior to the exam)

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