

## WHAT IS IT?

Stress echocardiography assesses the likelihood that you have significant narrowings in your heart arteries.

By comparing your heart function before and after exercise using echocardiography, your Cardiologist can infer whether enough blood is getting to your heart or if a narrowing is restricting this supply.

Usually, we stress your heart with exercise although, for patients who are unable to exercise, a drug called dobutamine is used instead of exercise. This drug is infused through a vein in your arm. This variant of stress echocardiography is called 'dobutamine stress echocardiography'.



After you have finished exercising, you will lie down on an examination bed and the technician will take more echocardiography pictures. You will be asked to breathe out and hold your breath briefly several times so the images can be recorded. It is very important that you do your best to hold your breath during this part of the examination because the technician has only 1-2 minutes to obtain these images before your heart slows down to a normal rate.

If you are having the dobutamine stress echo test then you will be required to lie down on the bed throughout the examination. As the dose of dobutamine is increased, your heart will pump harder and faster and the technician will take pictures of your heart with the echo machine throughout. You may experience some side effects from this drug including headache, flushing or a thumping heart. None of these are dangerous side effects. Most stress echo tests take about 45 minutes.

Complications are rare during both exercise and dobutamine stress echocardiography. Heart attack or abnormal heart rhythms may occur rarely. The risk of death is about 1 in 10,000.

The results will be sent to your doctor generally on the same day.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

At the beginning of the test, your heart will be imaged using ultrasound (called echocardiography). The technician will put a thick gel on your chest. The gel may feel cold but it does not harm your skin. Then, the technician will use the transducer to send and receive sound waves. These sound waves are not audible. The transducer will be placed directly on the left side of your chest, over your heart. The technician will press firmly as he or she moves the transducer across your chest and will ask you to briefly hold your breath during the test.

If you are having an exercise stress echocardiogram, you will walk on a treadmill and the grade and speed will increase every 3 minutes. This will make you feel like you are walking uphill. This increasing workload on the heart ensures the test is as accurate as possible. You should exercise for as long as possible to ensure your test is as accurate as possible.



▲ Exercise stress echocardiogram

## TESTING

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