

EXERCISE STRESS TEST

WHAT IS IT?

Exercise stress testing is a test that your Cardiologist uses to assess the likelihood there are blockages in your heart arteries. The test also assesses your fitness. Exercise stress testing is sometimes called an 'exercise tolerance test', 'stress test', 'exercise ECG', or 'treadmill test'.

PREPARATION

Do not eat or drink for 4 hours before the test, especially items that contain caffeine, which is found in coffee, tea, soft drinks and chocolate. Also, ask your doctor about whether you should withhold any of your medicines as some can affect the accuracy of this test.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

A technician will attach stick-on ECG electrodes to your chest after cleaning these areas with alcohol. The alcohol may feel cold. These electrodes attach to an ECG machine, which records your heart's electrical activity. You will also wear a blood pressure cuff around your arm, which measures your blood pressure during the test.

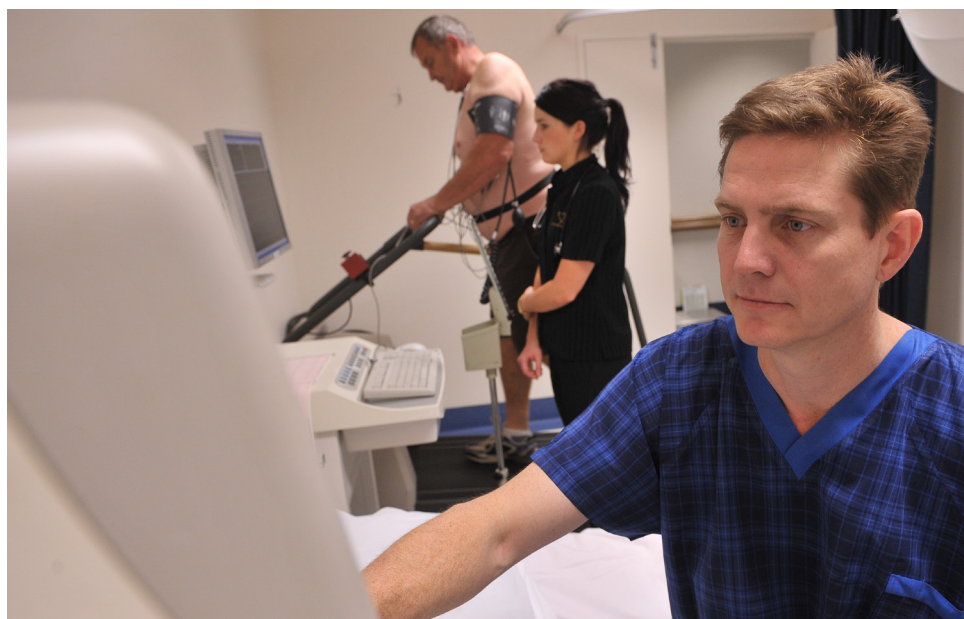
Before the test, the technician will record your blood pressure and pulse. They will also record your heart's electrical activity with an ECG before you start exercising.

During the test, you will walk on a treadmill. 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 that the test is as accurate as possible.

Your Cardiologist will look for changes in the ECG and blood pressure levels which may indicate that your heart is not getting enough oxygen because of blockages in your heart arteries. Other signs of coronary artery disease include chest pain or unusual shortness of breath whilst you are exercising. You should exercise for as long as possible to ensure your test is as accurate as possible.

Complications are very rare but include a risk of heart attack (1 in 1000 patients) and risk of death (1 in 10,000 patients).

At the end of the test, your doctor will give you a cool-down phase where you may lie down or sit quietly. After the test is over, you may eat, drink and go back to your normal activities. You may take the results with you, otherwise, they are posted to your referring doctor on the same day.



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