

Exercise Stress Test

What is an Exercise Stress Test?

An Exercise Stress Test is a walking test on a treadmill to see how your heart performs when it is asked to work harder. It is often used to determine if there are problems with the blood supply to the heart muscle which may put you at risk of having a heart attack. It also provides other valuable information including your heart rate and blood pressure response to exercise.

Why would I need an Exercise Stress Test?

Your doctor may recommend a cardiac stress test to:

- Identify the cause of chest pain, as well as shortness of breath, dizziness, and light-headedness
- Diagnose possible coronary artery disease if you're showing signs and symptoms
- Check the effectiveness of certain procedures such as coronary angioplasty and stenting or cardiac bypass surgery
- Help create a safe exercise plan (if you have heart disease risk factors)
- Identify any heart rhythm changes - usually experienced during exercise
- Determine your risk of heart disease, or other heart-related conditions

What happens during an Exercise Stress Test?

During an Exercise Stress Test, you will be asked to walk briskly on a treadmill during which the pattern of electrical activity generated by your heart (ECG) will be closely observed. You will also be asked to report any symptoms you may experience during the test.

Your heart rate and blood pressure will be recorded at specified intervals. The results of the test are available immediately following the test and will be forwarded to your referring Doctor.

The test takes approximately 30 minutes.

How do I prepare for an Exercise Stress Test?

As you will be exercising on a treadmill, we advise that you wear suitable clothing and footwear.

You will be asked to fast for 2 hours prior to the test. We also advise that you avoid consuming any caffeine or products which contain caffeine on the day of the test.

You can take any medication as normal unless you are told otherwise by your doctor.

What are the risks with an Exercise Stress Test?

An Exercise Stress Test is a low-risk test. Some patients may experience mild angina, shortness of breath, or musculoskeletal discomfort. There is a very small chance (less than 1%) of having a heart attack or dying during the test.

If you have a history of previous/recent heart attack, aortic dissection, recent fluid or clots in the lungs, severe heart valve disease, heart arrhythmias, palpitations, or recent increase in chest pain you should advise the staff before you commence the test.

Overall risks associated with an Exercise Stress Test are very uncommon and will be balanced against the potential benefits the information gained from the test could offer. Your doctor will be present at all times during the test and will be monitoring your progress closely. They will immediately stop the test if:

- You develop chest pain
- Your blood pressure is becoming a concern
- The ECG shows your heart isn't getting enough oxygen
- You become too tired
- You have another symptom that prevents you from exercising

