

Exercise Stress Tests

What to expect

This handout is a guide to Exercise Tolerance Tests, Treadmill Stress Echocardiograms, and Bicycle Stress Echocardiograms. This explains what exercise stress tests are and what to expect if you are having one.

What is an exercise stress test?

An exercise stress test is a test to show how well the heart works during exercise. During the exercise portion of this test, you may be exercising on a treadmill or stationary bicycle. The test might also include heart ultrasound images, which may be taken before and after exercise.

Why did my care team order this test?

Your care team may have ordered this test for any of the reasons below:

- To figure out if your heart is the cause of your recent symptoms.
- To help your care team manage your heart symptoms and medications.
- To assess your exercise tolerance.

What are the risks of this test?

An exercise stress test involves a very small amount of risk. Exercise may trigger your recent symptoms or changes to your heart rhythm. The risk of serious injury or death is 1 in 10,000 patients.

What happens during this test?

Clinic staff will place *electrocardiogram* (ECG) leads on your chest. The ECG leads are used to monitor your heart rhythm and activity. The staff will also place a blood pressure cuff on your arm to monitor your blood pressure at regular intervals during the test.

If your test includes heart ultrasound images, these images may be taken of your heart before, during, and immediately after exercise. The staff at your clinic may use an *intravenous* (IV) medication to help see your heart better.

The treadmill or bicycle will increase in speed and angle every 3 minutes. At some point, you will feel very tired or have other symptoms that will make you stop the test.

You will have the chance to tell clinic staff about your health history and any symptoms you have been experiencing. Please also make sure that you tell staff about any symptoms you experience during and after the test.

Who can stop the test?

You may ask to stop the test at any time if your symptoms become severe or uncomfortable. Common reasons why a test is stopped include shortness of breath, tiredness, and dizziness.

The clinic staff may stop the test if they are concerned about your well-being. Common reasons a test may be stopped are: abnormal heart rhythm, abnormal blood pressure, stated symptoms, and safety risks while exercising on the treadmill.

How do I get the test results?

After the test is completed, it is sent to a cardiologist to review and interpret. Final test results will be sent to the doctor that ordered this test. Your results may be available on MyChart for you to view.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Speak with the clinic staff performing the exercise test if you have questions or concerns.