



## Stress Test

### What is a stress test?

A Stress Test consists of physical exercise on a treadmill, while monitored continuously by EKG. By comparing the electrical activity of the heart before, during, and after physical exercise, your doctor can determine how well the heart muscle is functioning during increased stress.

### What is a stress test for?

Your doctor may recommend an exercise stress test for a number of reasons:

- To diagnose conditions such as coronary artery disease in patients with chest pain. Coronary artery disease can be diagnosed through an exercise stress test if it is causing cardiac ischemia (in which the heart is not getting enough oxygen-rich blood) and/or arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms).
- To diagnose a heart-related cause of symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath or lightheadedness.
- To determine a safe level of exercise among heart patients who wish to increase their level of physical activity.
- To screen for coronary artery disease in some patients who do not have symptoms.
- To gauge exercise capacity in heart failure patients.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of an angioplasty (a procedure in which plaque in the arteries is pushed back against the artery walls to make more room for blood flow), or other procedures.
- To predict future risk of dangerous heart-related conditions, such as heart attack.

Depending on the results of the exercise stress test, your doctor may recommend additional testing such as a cardiac catheterization.

### How do I prepare for the stress test?

- Do not eat or drink for three hours prior to the procedure. This reduces the likelihood of nausea that may accompany strenuous exercise after a heavy meal. Diabetics, particularly those who use insulin, will need special instructions from your doctor's office.
- Specific heart medicines may need to be stopped one or two days prior to the test. Such instructions are generally provided when the test is scheduled.
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes that are suitable for exercise.
- Do not wear powders, perfumes, colognes, oils or lotions.
- An explanation of the test is provided and the patient is asked to sign a consent form.



Hallmark Health  
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## What happens during a stress test?

The nurse or EKG technician performs an assessment and applies 10 electrode patches on your chest and torso. Small areas of body hair may need to be shaved in order to get good adherence. These electrode patches are hooked up to the Electrocardiography (EKG) machine, which displays the electrical activity of your heart. All the while, your blood pressure is monitored as well.

Your doctor will first take an EKG reading while you are at rest. Then, you will be asked to exercise on a treadmill. The exercise will begin with a slow walk, then steadily the speed and incline will change to increase the workload on the heart. If at any time you feel faint, fatigue, short of breath, or experience chest pain, IMMEDIATELY alert the doctor and the test will stop. EKG measurements will be taken continuously while you are exercising. Once you have reached a pre-determined, optimum heart rate based on age, the procedure will end.

You will then relax in a “cool down” period, while EKG measurements continue to be taken.

## How long does a stress test take?

A Stress Test varies in length depending on how long it takes to reach your optimum heart rate, and whether or not the test is terminated early due to fatigue, shortness of breath or chest pain. Total test time, including preparation, should total less than an hour.

## Are there any risks with the procedure?

The risk from a stress test is exceedingly small. Medical professionals including a cardiologist, registered nurse and/or EKG technician supervise the test.

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