

Cardio-Diagnostics – Cardiac Stress Test Information

An exercise electrocardiogram (ECG), also known as a stress test, is used to determine how the heart functions during exercise. The electrical activity of the heart is recorded while the patient walks on a treadmill. The speed and incline of the treadmill are usually increased at regular intervals so that the patient must walk faster, and possibly jog or run. Preparation and the actual test require 30 minutes to an hour.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THE TEST?

A physical examination is usually performed before the test. Your doctor may instruct you to stop taking regular medications, **bring a list of your medications with you**. Avoid alcohol and coffee, tea, cola, chocolate and other sources of caffeine for 4 hours before the test. Stop smoking and avoid heavy meals two hours before the test. Wear loose-fitting clothes and shoes appropriate for walking on a treadmill (please avoid wearing sandals or heels, if possible).

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE TEST?

A physician and trained technologist will supervise the test. An ECG will be taken and your blood pressure and heart rate will be checked before you start exercising. ECG electrodes will be fixed to your chest; wires are connected to the monitor, which produces a graphic representation of the hearts activity.

You will be shown how to start exercising on the treadmill. As the test progresses, you will be told when the intensity of the exercise will increase.

It is normal to experience some fatigue, discomfort and shortness of breath as you exercise more strenuously. Let the supervising technologist or physician know how you feel. The test will be stopped when you reach a predetermined heart rate, if you feel extreme fatigue or you experience any ill effects. After the test the electrodes will be removed and you will be asked to sit and relax for at least ten minutes before leaving. You may be tired or experience leg cramps soon after the test, or the next day.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE TEST?

An exercise ECG can show abnormalities of the heart that become apparent only when you exercise. It is valuable in determining whether heart disease is the cause of symptoms and in checking patients with risk factors. It is also helpful in evaluating those who have had a heart attack, surgery, are taking medication for heart disease, or anyone over age 40 who wants to start a program of strenuous exercise.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

There is a very slight risk of serious adverse effects. These include collapse, stroke and heart attack. A physician or trained medical technologist will be present to handle any emergency. An exercise ECG sometimes gives false results either indicating heart disease that does not exist, or failing to detect a problem that is present. For this reason, the test is usually combined with other studies to assure an accurate diagnosis.

CANCELLATIONS OR RESCHEDULING

OSMH Central Scheduling requires 24 hours minimum notice of a request to cancel or reschedule an appointment

If there are any questions about your appointment, please phone 705-325-2201 ext. 3151 with a minimum 24 hours' notice