

Stress Echocardiogram

General Information

Your health care provider wants you to have a stress echocardiogram, or stress echo. This is an ultrasound study of your heart muscle, heart valves and pericardium (the sac surrounding your heart). This painless test uses sound waves to see how well your heart is working during rest and exercise (stress).

A wand (transducer) makes sound waves. As the wand is moved over your chest, pictures of your heart appear on a computer screen and are digitally recorded on the computer. By saving select images of your heart, it is possible for your health care provider to compare how your heart muscle works before, during and after exercise.

You will have two echocardiograms for this test. The first one will be while your heart is at rest. The second one will be right after you exercise on a treadmill (stress).

Before the Test

- **Before the day of your test:**
 - Ask your health care provider if you should take your usual medicines the day of the test.
 - If you have diabetes, ask your health care provider for special medicine instructions the day of the test.
- **On the day of your test:**
 - Do not eat, drink or smoke 4 hours before the test.
 - Wear loose, comfortable clothing and walking or running shoes.
 - You may drink 1 cup of water before the test.
 - Tell the technician if you are pregnant.

During the Test

- You will undress to your waist and be given a gown to wear.
- You may have a small needle inserted into an arm vein for medicine you may need during the test.
- A member of your health care team will place adhesive patches (electrodes) on your chest. The electrodes are connected to the electrocardiogram monitor.
- You will lie on your left side on an exam table while the images of your heart are taken.
- Your blood pressure will be checked, and the cuff will be left in place for regular blood pressure checks during the test.

- A sonographer or technician will put an odorless, water-soluble gel on your skin where the wand will go. The gel helps the wand get the best pictures possible. It may feel cool and a bit moist.
- The room lights may be dimmed so the monitor won't reflect any glare.
- You may feel a slight pressure from the transducer as it is being moved across your skin. Tell the sonographer or technician if you are uncomfortable.
- You may be asked to hold your breath change your position, or lie quietly.
- You will then be asked to walk on a treadmill.
- The treadmill will slowly increase in speed and tilt upward, like a small hill.
- During the test, you will be asked to report any chest pain, unusual shortness of breath, increased fatigue, leg pain, dizziness or if you feel faint.
- The length of the test will depend on your symptoms and/or the maximum heart rate.
- After you stop exercising, you will lie on your left side and more images of your heart will be taken.

After the Test

- Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored until your heartbeat returns to normal.
- You may return to your normal activities.
- Your health care provider will receive the test results. He or she will talk with you about your test results.
- If you have any questions, please talk with your regular health care provider.