

Treadmill Exercise Stress Test

What is a Treadmill Exercise Stress Test ?

The treadmill exercise stress test is used to determine the effects of exercise on the heart. Exercise allows doctors to diagnose the presence or absence of [coronary artery disease](#) (blockages of the arteries that feed blood and oxygen to the heart) and to detect abnormal heart rhythms ([arrhythmias](#)). This test, typically involving the patient walking on a treadmill while attached to an electrocardiogram, measures a patient's ability to exercise and the electrical waves of the heart during exercise. This test can help detect heart problems that may not be apparent at rest.

This test is not painful, but it is physically demanding. Most patients experience some degree of fatigue.

There is a very small risk of complications (heart attack, abnormal heart rhythm). Everything is done to prevent such an occurrence. Medical staff and emergency equipment are immediately available to assist in an emergency.

What should I do before the test ?

To help ensure accurate results, patients should take the following steps in preparation for a treadmill exercise stress test:

- Refrain from strenuous activity for 12 hours before the test.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke for two hours prior to the test. Unless instructed otherwise by your physician, patients should continue to take prescribed medications. Patients who have used Viagra (sildenafil citrate) within the 24 hours prior to the test or Cialis (Tadalafil) within 48 hours of the test, should tell the technician. It may compromise the safety of the test.
- Wear comfortable walking shoes and clothing for the test.
- Refrain from eating at least two hours before the test. This will prevent the possibility of nausea, which may accompany vigorous exercise after eating.
- Make your last meal light and without tea, coffee or alcohol.
- Before the test, you will be given an explanation of the test and you will be asked to sign a consent form. Feel free to ask any questions about the procedure.

What happens during the test ?

- Several areas on your chest and shoulders will be cleansed with alcohol and a mild abrasive pad will be used to prepare the skin for the electrodes (small sticky patch). Men may need to have

areas of their chest shaved, to ensure that the electrodes stay in place to allow for continuous electrocardiogram recordings (ECG).

- After resting blood pressure and ECG measurements are taken, you will be asked to walk on a treadmill. On the treadmill, the walk starts off slowly, then the speed and incline increases at set times.
- Because the test is effort-dependent, it is very important that you walk as long as possible or until instructed to stop by the nurse. Please let the nurse know if you are having any symptoms of chest pain, palpitation, unusual shortness of breath or are feeling uncomfortable in any way.
- Your blood pressure and ECG are monitored throughout the procedure. If a problem occurs, the technologist will stop the test right away. Cardiologists are immediately available if necessary.

What happens after the test?

After the exercise portion of the test is over, you will still be monitored for another 5 to 10 minutes while you recover. The nurse will remove the electrodes and cleanse the electrode sites.

- Your cardiologist will read the test and generate a report. Your cardiologist or referring physician will review the results of the test with you.
- If the test is abnormal or inconclusive, then additional tests may be ordered.
- The information gained from the exercise test helps your doctor make an accurate diagnosis and develop a treatment plan that is best for you.