

# Stress Echocardiogram

## Stress Echocardiogram

A stress echocardiogram 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 during exercise.

A wand-like instrument makes the sound waves. As the ultrasound wand is moved over your chest, pictures of your heart appear on a screen and are recorded.

By saving select images of your heart, it is possible for your doctor to compare how your heart muscle works before, during and after exercise.

The treadmill stress test takes about 1 hour, including preparation time.

## Before the Test

- Ask your doctor ahead of time if you should take your usual medicines the day of the test, especially if you have diabetes.
- Do not eat or drink 4 hours before the test.
- Do not smoke 2 hours before the test.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing (slacks and a top) and walking shoes.
- Tell the technician if you are pregnant.

## During the Test

- You will undress to your waist and be given a gown to wear.
- The technician will put electrocardiogram (EKG) patches on your chest to monitor your heart rate.
- You will lie on your left side on an exam table while the technician takes ultrasound images of your heart.
- Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored during the test. As you exercise, your heart rate and blood pressure will change. This is normal.
- You will then walk in place on a treadmill.
- Every 3 minutes, the treadmill will gradually 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.
- When you reach your maximum level of exercise, you will be told to stop.
- After you stop exercising, you will lie on your left side and the technician will take additional pictures of your heart.

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## After the Test

- Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored until your heartbeat returns to normal.
- The doctor will display the two sets of images side by side to compare the way your heart works at rest and after exercise.
- Your doctor will talk with you about your test results.
- You may return to your normal activities.

Call the Allina Health Minneapolis Heart Institute — Minneapolis at 612-863-3900 if you have any questions about the test.