

Dobutamine Stress Echo

General Information

A dobutamine stress echocardiogram helps your doctor see how well your heart is working during simulated exercise, at rest, and if your heart has good blood supply.

This test is used for people who cannot exercise on a treadmill. Instead, you are given dobutamine, a medicine that makes your heart beat faster and stronger while you lie on an exam table. Your heartbeat is then closely monitored for changes.

The dobutamine stress test takes up to 90 minutes to complete.

Before the Test

- As an outpatient, ask your doctor ahead of time if you should take your usual medicines the day of the test, especially if you have diabetes.
- As an inpatient, your nurse will give you your medicines the day of the test.
- Do not eat or drink anything 4 hours before the test.
- As an outpatient, you will need to wear loose, comfortable clothing (slacks and a top). As an inpatient, you will continue to wear a gown.
- Tell the technician if you are pregnant.
- Do not smoke 2 hours before the test.

During the Test

- You will undress to your waist and be given a gown to wear.
- A technician will put electrocardiogram (EKG) patches on your chest to monitor your heartbeat.
- Your blood pressure is checked, and the cuff will be left in place for regular blood pressure checks during the test.
- As an outpatient, a nurse will insert a small intravenous (IV) line in your hand or arm for the dobutamine.
- You will lie on your left side on an exam table while the technician takes ultrasound images of your heart.
- It is normal to feel your heart pound for a few minutes. Your heart rate and blood pressure are monitored during and after the test. You may be given a second medicine to slow your heart rate to a normal level.
- You will be asked to report any pain in your arms, chest or jaw, unusual shortness of breath, nausea, irregular heart beat, flushing or headache.
- You may need to have a dobutamine stress test with contrast.
 - This is the same test as the dobutamine test, except that contrast solution is added through the IV line.
 - Contrast solution is sometimes needed when ultrasound images are unclear.

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After the Test

- Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored until your heartbeat returns to normal in about 5 to 10 minutes.
- As an outpatient, your IV will be removed from your arm or hand and a bandage will be applied.
- You may return to your normal activities.
- The cardiologist or your health care provider will give you the results of the test.

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