

Consent Information - Patient Copy

Stress Echocardiogram

1. WHAT IS A STRESS ECHOCARDIOGRAM?

The Stress Echocardiogram measures the function of the heart, lungs and blood vessels. It is done to help diagnose blocked arteries in the heart (coronary artery disease) and also provide specific information about valvular disease and pressure in the heart and lungs. There are two parts to this test.

First, a cardiac scientist performs an echocardiogram using an ultrasound machine. An echocardiogram checks how your heart functions when resting.

You lie on your left side. To ensure good contact between your skin and the probe, surgical jelly is placed at several different sites on your chest. During this part of the test you hear loud swishing noises. This is the blood flowing through the valves of your heart.

In the second part of the test, your heart is exercised or 'stressed'. If you can walk easily, you can walk on the treadmill. The speed and slope of the treadmill will increase every 3 minutes. This makes your heart do more work and you will exercise quite hard. The test will be stopped if you have chest pain, become very tired or very short of breath (puffed).

When your heart is working as hard as possible, you stop exercising and quickly lie down on the bed. More echocardiogram pictures are taken.

If you have difficulty walking, the doctor may decide to use a drug called 'Dobutamine'. This drug copies the effect of exercise on the heart and makes the heart work faster and harder. A small needle is inserted into the back of your hand and the Dobutamine is given slowly through this needle over the next twenty minutes. If you feel unwell you should tell staff at once.

2. WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS SPECIFIC PROCEDURE?

In recommending this procedure your doctor has balanced the benefits and risks of the procedure against the benefits and risks of not proceeding. Your doctor believes there is a net benefit to you going ahead.

The risks/complications of this procedure are;

Common risks (more than 5%) include;

- Mild angina.
- Shortness of breath.
- Musculoskeletal discomfort.

Rare risks (less than 1%) include;

- Abnormal heart beat, that usually settles without treatment.
- Build up of fluid in the lungs. You may need medication to treat this.
- Chest pain. This is treated with medications.
- Heart Attack.

- Death as a result of this procedure is extremely rare.

Side effects of Dobutamine:

You may suffer:

Headache, nausea, vomiting, restlessness, muscle cramps or weakness, chest pain, shortness of breath (feeling puffed), dizziness, palpitations and rash.

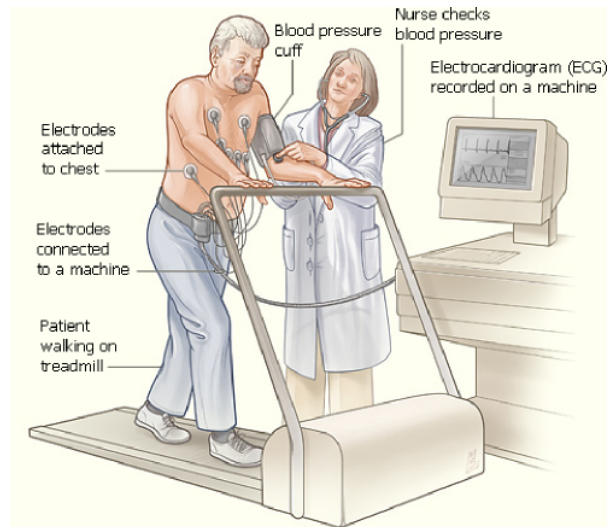


Fig 1. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

3. BEFORE YOUR PROCEDURE

- Eat a light snack and only drink water 2-3 hours before.
- Do not do any strenuous exercise on the day of the procedure.
- Take your usual medication, unless your doctor or hospital has advised otherwise and bring a list of your medications to the hospital.
- Read and follow any other instructions or information given to you by your doctor/hospital.
- Wear shorts, pants or a skirt suitable for exercising in.
- Wear comfortable non-slip shoes suitable for riding a bike or for walking.

NOTES TO TALK TO MY DOCTOR ABOUT