



Preparing For Your Stress Test with Exercise and Images

A stress test helps you and your doctor learn more about how your heart is working. For the test you will exercise on a treadmill to raise your heart rate and blood pressure. We will give you a radioactive tracer through a thin tube inserted in your arm (an intravenous or IV line). The tracer allows us to take special pictures of blood flowing in your heart. Below are instructions for you and your caregivers to help you prepare for this test. Call our office at 617-643-1534 with any questions you have about these instructions or your test in general.

What are the risks of having this test?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you cannot have this test done.

- Your heart rate could become too slow or fast
- Your blood pressure could become too low or high
- The rhythm of your heart pumping could change (arrhythmia)
- You could have a heart attack
- There is a small risk for death with this test

How should I prepare for my test on the days beforehand?

- Check with your doctor about how to take your medicines before the test. You may need to take a medicine later than you normally do.
- If you have diabetes, check with your doctor to see if you should take your diabetic medicines or change your daily insulin dose.

What will I do the day of my test before I arrive?

- For the medicines your doctor says you can still take before your test, take pills only with a small sip of water.
- **Twelve hours before your test time**
 - Don't have food or drinks that have caffeine, such as chocolate, coffee, tea, or soft drinks.
- **Three hours before your test time**
 - Don't eat or drink anything. Only sip water with the medicines your doctor says are okay to take.

What can I expect when I arrive?

Tell us if you have sensitive skin or any allergies before we prepare you for the test.

We will clean the skin on your chest with alcohol and rub it with a rough pad. If you have chest hair, we may cut it with electric clippers. We will place several small sticky pads on your chest that lead to the EKG machine that measures your heart's rhythm. If you don't already have a thin tube inserted into a vein (IV line) in your arm, we will give you one for the test.

How is the stress test done?

Your test will take 2-3 hours and will happen in two parts. For the first part, we will take special pictures with the tracer in your blood before you walk on the treadmill. For the second part, you will exercise on the treadmill and we will take a second set of pictures.

First Part (Resting Test):

- While you are resting, we will put the tracer into your IV line.
- We will wait 30 minutes then take special pictures of your heart. We will ask you to lie very still while we take the pictures. This takes about 15 minutes. You may breathe normally.

Second Part (Exercise Test):

- We will first connect you to a heart monitor and blood pressure cuff. This lets us watch you closely before, during and after this test.
- You will walk on a treadmill that will slowly get faster and steeper. You will exercise until you are very tired.
- We will ask you to let us know how you are feeling or if you have any discomfort at any time during the test.
- We will give you more tracer through your IV when you are near the end of your exercise time on the treadmill.
- You will recover from your test for 5-10 minutes.
- We will take the second set of pictures about 30 minutes after you finish exercising.

What happens after the test?

You can go back to having the foods and drinks you normally do and taking your medicines. You can also go back to doing your usual activities you did before the test.

Your doctor will receive the results of your test and share them with you.

Special Directions From Your Care Team

Please follow these other directions your care team gives you.

Reviewed for plain language by the staff of the Blum Center.

This document was created using evidence-based practice. It is intended to provide health-related information so that you may be better informed. It is not a substitute for a doctor's medical advice.