

Important Information Regarding Your Nuclear Stress Test

A stress test helps your physician know how well your heart works during physical activity. As your body works harder during the test it requires more oxygen and more energy. In order to meet the demand, the heart must beat faster and harder. Your physician has ordered a nuclear stress test that combines the traditional treadmill stress test and monitoring with nuclear imaging that can evaluate the coronary blood flow. The ultimate goal of the test is to see if your heart receives enough blood from its own arteries when it's required to work harder.

Why Are Stress Tests Commonly Ordered?

1. To determine whether the symptoms you are having are due to any heart condition (symptoms such as: chest pain, palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, excessive tiredness)
2. To see if a person without symptoms has silent heart disease, i.e. blockages or coronary heart disease
3. To determine the risk of future heart problems in patients with known heart disease
4. To determine if the test can recreate symptoms or provoke a change in ECG or abnormal rhythm
5. To evaluate effectiveness of surgical procedure, angioplasty, or medical therapy
6. Pre-operative clearance

Preparation For The Test: (Your test will take an average of 3 hours)

Important: If you are pregnant, or suspect that you are pregnant, or are breastfeeding; discuss this with your doctor before undergoing this procedure.

- Do not eat, drink or smoke for **4 hours** before your test. You may have water.
- Do not eat or drink caffeinated foods or beverages for **24 hours** before your test. Caffeine can be found in coffee, tea, chocolate, soft drinks cold and certain migraine preparations.
Note: Decaffeinated products also contain small amounts of caffeine and may NOT be consumed.
- Wear comfortable loose fitting clothing. It is helpful to wear a short sleeved shirt that buttons in the front. **Do not wear shirts or blouses with beads or metal studs**, as it will interfere with the pictures.
- Do not apply lotions, oils or powders to the chest area.
- Medication: Take your medications (with sips of water) unless you have been otherwise instructed
- Do not consume alcohol, take tranquilizers or sedatives for at least **4 hours** before the test

What Will Happen To Me During The Test?

The nuclear test allows your doctor to see pictures of your heart when your heart is at rest and following stress. To create those pictures you will receive 2 injections of a small amount of radioactive material. The level of radioactivity used is extremely small (comparable to chest x-ray). An intravenous line (IV) will be placed in your arm before the first injection of Thallium, and will be used later during the stress test for the second injection of Cardiolite. Following the first injection, you will be under a gamma camera and pictures of your heart will be recorded. The camera does not produce any radiation. It will be placed close to your chest and pictures will be taken for approximately 20 minutes. This portion of the test is called the “rest study”. Following your rest study, our trained staff will place electrodes on your chest that will constantly monitor your heart during the test. Your blood pressure will also be monitored.

Your heart will be stressed, through exercise on a treadmill. During the test you will constantly be monitored. The actual stress portion takes approximately 15-20 minutes, however the preparation takes longer (up to 45 minutes). Before the end of the stress test, a second injection (Cardiolite) will be administered. This radiopharmaceutical is taken up by your heart muscle and can be visualized by the gamma camera in the same manner as the “rest study”. The imaging portion of your stress study will be taken approximately 30 minutes after the stress test.

What To Expect During The Test?

Normal response during the stress test includes: feeling tired, shortness of breath and sweating. The test will be stopped if you feel too tired, or when we have gathered all the information we need.

What Happens After The Test?

When the test is over, you may eat and drink and return to your normal routine. You may resume all of your medications. The films will be reviewed by our Nuclear Cardiologist and results will be sent to your primary care Physician. You will be notified of the results within 1 week of the test.