

Exercise tolerance testing

Patient information sheet

Exercise tolerance testing is used to assess and detect any abnormality in the blood supply to your heart or in its rhythm while exercising.

It involves you walking on a treadmill whilst monitoring your heart and recording your blood pressure during exercise and recovery. It is not a test that you pass or fail.

The risk of problems occurring during exercise is indeed very low (1 in 10,000) but occasionally people do develop chest pain and abnormal arrhythmias which do not settle.

It is for this reason that the tests are conducted in hospital under close supervision.

Prior to attending the test you should:

- Eat only a light meal.
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothing.
- Avoid strenuous exercise four hours prior to the test.
- Avoid or minimise smoking 24 hours prior to the test.
- Conform to any medication request. Please keep taking your medication as usual, stop taking your medication **only** if requested by your referring cardiologist.

The test is carried out by two appropriately trained staff, a supervising cardiac physiologist and an assistant.

You need to give a verbal consent before the start of the test.

When you first arrive in the exercise room you will be asked to undress to the waist and take a seat on the couch.

Your chest will be prepared by cleaning the skin and shaving if necessary, to ensure good skin contact.

Ten electrodes will be fitted to your chest to connect you up to the monitor where your heart rhythm will be displayed. A blood pressure cuff will be attached to one of your arms.

Everything about the test will be explained and you will be given a demonstration of how to walk the treadmill.

The treadmill starts off very slowly and gradually increases in speed and slope.

During the exercise you will be regularly asked how you are feeling. If you feel for example, short of breath, develop pain in your chest, arms or legs, or if you feel dizzy or tired you must tell the cardiac physiologist/scientist supervising the test.

The treadmill stops gradually so you must walk with the belt until it stops completely.
Do not jump off.

During recovery you will sit on the couch relaxing until your heart rate and blood pressure return to where they started.

As a precautionary measure we may ask you to wait in the outpatient reception area for a further 15 minutes before leaving, to ensure you are well.

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The result of your exercise stress testing will be sent to your referring cardiologist.

In some cases if an appropriate level of exercise has not been achieved your referring clinician may wish to rebook you at a later date to repeat the test under medical supervision.

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