

DOBUTAMINE STRESS ECHOCARDIOGRAM

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What is it?

Your Doctor has ordered a Dobutamine stress echo. This test utilizes the drug Dobutamine to simulate the heart without the need for physical exertion and is particularly useful in patients who are unable to exercise to a level that accurately excludes problems with the heart arteries. This may be useful in patients with arthritis or poor circulation in the legs. The initial echocardiogram uses painless ultrasound to examine the function of the heart muscle and heart valves. A drip is then inserted in your arm to allow the infusion of Dobutamine, which makes the heart beat faster and stronger, consuming more oxygen and highlighting areas of inadequate blood supply. During this time, you may feel your heart beating forcefully but this is normal. The initial echo scan takes 45 minutes and is followed by a period of drug infusion lasting usually 10 – 15 minutes. Following this a repeat scan is performed that takes 20 minutes. During the test we will watch your heart rate and blood pressure and will want you to **tell us of any symptoms** such as chest pain, dizziness or shortness of breath.

What preparation do I need?

It is preferable to not eat for at least 4 hours before the test.

Medications: Check with your Doctor. We usually stop beta blockers (Tenormin, Betaloc, Noten, Lopressor, Visken, Inderal, Atenelol) and Calcium blockers (Isoptin, Cordilox, Veracaps, Cardizem) for 24-48 hours before the test.

What are the risks?

Dobutamine stress echos have an excellent accuracy of detecting problems with the heart arteries of between 90 and 95%. However, in occasional patients they may fail to detect actual heart problems. If your chest pain persists despite a satisfactory exercise test you should notify your Doctor who may then order more extensive testing. Dobutamine is a drug that is often used to treat patients with heart disease and therefore the risk of a Dobutamine stress echo is low. Your blood pressure and heart rhythm is continually monitored. Rarely, in patients with very severe heart disease (and with other forms of stress testing) it can precipitate a heart attack or cardiac arrest. **You should notify us if your chest pains have been worsening or become more frequent in the days leading up to the test.** We have full facilities to deal with cardiac emergencies and the backup of the hospital and Coronary Care Unit if required.