

EXERCISE TESTS

THE HEARTSPECIALISTS

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What is it?

An exercise test requires you to walk on a motorised treadmill while you are attached to an ECG machine and is designed to look for evidence of heart disease while the heart is under strain. It is surprisingly easy to walk on the treadmill and can be easily accomplished by most patients, even those in their eighties. The treadmill begins at a very slow speed, which will be increased every few 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.

How long does it take?

You should allow about 30 minutes for the test. The walking component of the test usually lasts between 3 and 12 minutes on the treadmill. At the conclusion of the test we require you to rest with us for 10 minutes. We will have a result for you to take to your Doctor at the end of the test.

What preparation do I need?

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

Men should wear comfortable loose clothes such as tracksuit pants or shorts and comfortable shoes such as runners. Chest hair is shaved to allow the sticky electrode to adhere to the skin.

Ladies should wear skirts or pants to allow the chest to be separately exposed for electrode placement. A loose fitting gown will be provided. Comfortable flat shoes are preferable.

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?

Exercise tests have an accuracy of between 70 and 80%, meaning that 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. The risk of a stress tests is low but rarely, patients with severe heart disease can suffer heart attacks or arrhythmias. **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.