What is a Stress Echo Test?

Why do I need a stress test?

This test helps your physician determine how your heart functions when it is made to work harder by walking on the treadmill. An echocardiogram, the ultrasound study of the heart, evaluates the heart’s size, how strongly it pumps, and how well the valves are working. This is done prior to exercise, at peak heart rate after walking on the treadmill, and after your heart rate has slowed back down.

The stress echo test is useful to determine:
- If there is a decreased supply of blood and oxygen to the heart at rest as well as with exercise
- If there is reduced movement of the heart muscle
- Overall level of cardiovascular conditioning
- How quickly the heart recovers after exercise
- How hard the heart can work before symptoms develop
- Estimate the risk of surgery that can cause cardiac complications

What happens during the test?

- An echo technician will do a resting scan of your heart while you are lying down on an exam table. You will lie on your back and on your left side.
- A stress lab technician will prep ten small areas on your chest and place electrodes (small, flat, sticky patches) on these areas. The electrodes are attached to an EKG monitor that charts your heart’s electrical activity during the test.
- You will be on an exam table while the technician performs EKG’s and blood pressures while you are lying down, sitting up, and standing.
- Next, your heart will be “stressed” on the treadmill. You will walk on the treadmill. The speed will get faster and the hill (elevation) will get steeper every three minutes that you are on the treadmill. You can stop the test at any time if you need to. The longer you walk, the more information we can send to your physician. The actual exercise time is usually less than 12 minutes.
- While on the treadmill, you will be asked by the technician how tired you are on a 1-10 scale. A rating of one means that you feel that walking is really easy and you are not tired at all. A rating of 10 means that you are so tired that you need to stop walking immediately.
- Please tell the technician immediately if you have chest pain, shortness of breath, or any other unusual symptoms at any time.
- The stress lab staff will watch for any changes on the EKG monitor that suggest the test should be stopped. A physician is available if needed.
- After you are done on the treadmill, you will immediately lie on your left side on the exam table. The echo technician will do another scan of your heart. It is important to get from the treadmill to the exam table as fast as possible since the echo technician has to start the scan before your heart starts to slow back down.
- Your heart rate, blood pressure, and EKG will continue to be monitored until the levels are returning to normal. One more echo scan will be done as your heart rate returns to normal.
Instruction checklist for the stress echo test:

• Call the Pre-registration dept. at (419) 423-5304, at least 24 hours prior to your test to update any of your personal information. This will save you time on the day of your test. Also call (419) 423-5110 at least 24 hours prior to the test date to confirm your appointment.

• Bring a list of medications you take with you to the test. Include the name and dosage amounts of each medicine. This information can be found on the prescription or bottle label.

  Do not take any of your medications unless instructed otherwise by your physician.
  ▪ If you have asthma, please bring your inhaler medication with you.
  ▪ If you have diabetes, ask your physician how to adjust your medications the day of your test.

• Please refrain from any strenuous exercise or activities the day before your test, or the day of the test.

• Do Not eat or drink anything except for small amounts of water for 4 hours prior to your testing time. The last meal you eat prior to the test should be a low fat meal and should not include caffeine.

• Do Not use lotion or powders on your chest the day of the test.

• Do Not smoke the day of the test! Nicotine will interfere with the results of your test.

• Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing. Pants or shorts and short sleeve shirts are preferred. (No long sleeves.) Do not wear one-piece undergarments or body suits. Wear tennis or crepe soled shoes.

  Parking: Please use our FREE valet service at the Center for Diagnostic Studies (CDS) for the easiest of parking. You can also park in the CDS parking lot or use the parking garage.

  Register: Please check in at the Center for Diagnostic Studies registration department on the first floor to pick up your paperwork and they will direct you to the Heart Care Center.

• The Stress Echo Test takes about 1 ½ hours to complete.

• If you need to CANCEL OR CHANGE your appointment, Please call CENTRAL SCHEDULING at (419) 423-5323.

• If you have any QUESTIONS about the test, Please call (419) 423-5110. Please leave a message if prompted to do so. We will return your call as soon as possible.

• We request a 24 hour notice for changes or cancellations if at all possible.