

Stress Echocardiogram

On the morning of the exam, do not use lotion or powder on your body.

A stress echocardiogram (echo) is a test used to detect coronary artery disease (CAD), a blockage of blood flow to the heart. It tests your heart's reaction during periods of rest and exercise. The echocardiogram uses high-frequency sound waves (ultrasounds) to look at how the various parts of the heart work. If CAD is present, the stress echo often will note changes in how the heart muscle contracts. The stress echo combines an echocardiogram with the standard treadmill stress test. This provides a more complete picture of the workings of your heart. Allow 1 to 2 hours from arrival until the exam is complete.

Before the Test

- Do not eat or drink for 3 hours before the test. Take your usual medicine with small sips of water unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.
- Be sure to take your blood pressure medicine.
- On the morning of the exam, do not use lotion or powder on your body.
- Wear a comfortable, loose-fitting, 2-piece outfit and exercise shoes.
- On the day of the test, arrive 30 minutes before your appointment. Go to the 8th floor, reception desk, in the Galter Pavilion, 201 E. Huron St.

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 E. Huron, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st and 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions; 1st floor of Prentice (including the Prentice 24 hour desk near the Superior entrance).

- After the test is explained, including its benefits and risks, you will be asked to sign a consent form before the test starts.

- To prepare for the test, you will be asked to undress from the waist up and change into a hospital gown. (A bra cannot be worn.)

Also be sure to bring:

- Your doctor's written order for the test.
- A list of all your current medicines (prescription, over-the-counter and herbals).
- Medical insurance information.
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only).

During the Test

Electrodes will be placed on your chest to record an electrocardiogram (ECG) during the test. You will lie down on a special exam bed where a pre-exercise echocardiogram will be done. A small transducer (probe) coated with a light gel will be placed on your chest to obtain images of your heart. The pictures, recorded on videotape, will be compared to images obtained right after exercise.

You then will exercise on a treadmill. The rate and incline will be increased every 3 minutes. Your blood pressure will be checked every 3 minutes during and after exercise. It is important to walk on the treadmill long enough to show the heart's reaction to varied amounts of work.

After the exercise, you will move back to the echo bed as quickly as possible to obtain the post-exercise echo. This is vital for a complete test.

After the Test

The electrodes and gel will be removed from your chest and you will get dressed. Showers are if you wish to take one. You may resume your regular diet. If you have any questions, call Echocardiography scheduling at 312-926-7483.

Health Information Resources

For more information, visit one of Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Health Learning Centers. These state-of-the-art health libraries are located on the third floor of the Galter Pavilion and on the first floor of the Prentice Women's Hospital. Health information professionals are available to help you find the information you need and provide you with personalized support at no charge. You may contact the Health Learning Centers by calling 312-926-LINK (5465) or by sending an e-mail to hlc@nmh.org.

For additional information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit our Web site at www.nmh.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar a el departamento de representantes para pacientes al 312-926-3112.

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