

# What is a Stress Test?

A stress test checks how your heart works while you exercise. Because the heart pumps harder when you work out and needs more blood, this test can show any problems with its blood supply.

*"The most common symptom that a stress test is recommended for is chest pain, to see if the heart is the cause of the chest pain. Otherwise, other reasons would be, because someone is losing consciousness, is having a very rapid heartbeat, is getting palpitations, or having episodes when the heart rate gets too slow."-Dr. Rajiv Chandra, MD, Cardiologist*

A stress test can help diagnose heart disease, heart rhythm problems, valve disease, and heart failure. You may be asked to stop taking certain medicines before the test, and to avoid eating, drinking, or smoking 2 to 4 hours beforehand. You can still drink water.

*"Because you'll be working out wear something comfortable like shorts, sweat pants, along with some tennis shoes or sneakers."-Meredith Oslowski, Registered Medical Assistant*

Before the test, several sticky pads will be placed on your chest and belly. Then wires will be connected to the pads. The wires are hooked up to an electrocardiogram, also called ECG or EKG—a machine that records the electrical activity in your heart. A blood pressure cuff will go on your arm. Then, you'll either walk on a treadmill or pedal a stationary bike. You'll start at a very slow pace.

*"In about twenty seconds the treadmill is going to speed up again."*

Every few minutes, the speed will increase. Also, if you're on a treadmill, the incline will be raised to make your heart work harder. The goal is to get you up to your target heart rate. While you exercise, your blood pressure, heart rate and breathing will be measured, along with the electrical activity of your heart.

*"Three, two, one. Now it's going to slow down."*

The whole test takes about an hour, but you'll be working out for only about 15 minutes.

*"If the patient starts to complain of shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, those type of symptoms we will definitely start to ... We'll stop the test or slow them down."- Meredith Oslowski, Registered Medical Assistant*

Afterward, you may be asked to lie down, so your provider can watch for any changes while your heart rate goes back to normal.

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*"If you're not healthy enough to do the stress test on the treadmill we will give you a medication that will basically exercise you without putting you on the treadmill."*- Meredith Oslowski, Registered Medical Assistant

*"How do you feel?" "Great."*

After the test, you can go right back to your regular routine.

*"So, if there is no problems on that particular test then there may be other reasons why you are having symptoms, and your doctor will then proceed forward and look at what other causes may be there for your symptoms. Of course, if you find a problem on that particular test, then it will help direct them as to what other tests would confirm it and how best to have a treatment plan or fix the problem."*- Dr. Rajiv Chandra, MD, Cardiologist