

Exercise Cardiac Stress Test with Imaging

An exercise cardiac stress test with imaging shows how fast your heart is beating and if its rhythm is steady or not.

It shows how well the blood moves through your heart when it works hard during exercise.

It gives your doctor more information about your heart's health than an exercise stress test without imaging.

Your doctor may suggest this test if you have symptoms like chest pain or shortness of breath.

An exercise cardiac stress test with imaging can help your doctor find out if you have coronary artery disease, also called CAD.

When you have CAD, the arteries that feed your heart muscle may become narrowed or blocked.

If you already have CAD, the test can find out if your treatment plan for heart disease is working. And it can show if you need other tests to find and treat the narrowed arteries.

An exercise cardiac stress test with imaging can also show how hard you can safely exercise.

Before the test, let your doctor know if you're pregnant. They may recommend a different test.

And tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take.

Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before the procedure.

And follow your doctor's directions for preparing for your procedure, including when you should stop eating and drinking.

You may be asked to not eat or drink anything but water for a short time before the test.

It's important not to have caffeine before the test, so be sure to avoid coffee, tea, and soda.

On the day of the test, wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes and good walking shoes.

During the cardiac stress imaging test, your health care provider will look at how well your heart works before, during, and after the test.

You might ride a stationary bike, walk on a treadmill, or turn a crank with your arms. You'll have to work harder and harder as the test goes on.

As you exercise, imaging tests will be done to see how your heart is working. One type of testing, called echocardiography or echo, uses sound waves to create a moving picture of your heart.

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Other types of imaging tests use a special dye, injected into your bloodstream.

During the test, a special scanner takes pictures of your heart at least twice: when it's at rest and when it's working hard.

A health care provider will also monitor your blood pressure, your heart rate, your breathing, how well you are feeling, and the air you breathe out. All of this gives information about how your heart is working.

Once your health care provider has the information they need, the test will stop.

You might need to stop your test early if you have problems such as: chest pain; extreme shortness of breath; feeling lightheaded, weak, or warm; sweating, nausea, or blurry vision; abnormally low or high blood pressure; an abnormal heart rhythm; low levels of oxygen in your blood.

If you have any of these symptoms, tell the health care provider. They can quickly stop the test if you don't feel well.

After the test, you'll be monitored for a while.

Once you're home, you'll be able to get back to your usual activities right away.

Your doctor's office will let you know your results.

Having a cardiac stress imaging test can be...well, stressful.

But knowing what to expect and how to prepare can help.

And remember, you can always call your doctor if you have questions or concerns.