

About Exercise Stress Echocardiography (Stress Echo)

An exercise stress echocardiogram (stress echo) is a walking test that involves the examination of your heart before and after exercise. It gives the Cardiologist information about your heart function by assessing ultrasound images and an electrocardiogram (ECG).

Preparing for an Exercise Stress Echo

1. Wear flat walking shoes (joggers or similar), and comfortable clothes for walking on a treadmill. (Shorts or pants would be best, rather than a dress).
2. Do not eat a big meal before your test (within 2 hours). It is okay to drink water.
3. If you use inhalers (puffers), bring them with you.
4. Do not take any of the following medications on the day of the test, unless told to by your Doctor.
 - Beta blockers (metoprolol, atenolol, sotalol, bisoprolol)
 - Calcium channel blockers (diltiazem, verapamil, amlodipine, lercanidipine)
5. Bring a list of your medications with you.

If you are taking these medicines, or aren't sure, please inform us before your appointment.

What to expect

There are three parts to the test.

Part 1: Resting images

First, a Cardiac Sonographer will give you an echocardiogram using an ultrasound machine. This checks how your heart functions when you are resting. An ECG will be connected so your heart rhythm can be monitored. You will lie on your left side while the pictures are taken. This part will take about ten minutes.

Part 2: Exercise

Then, you will begin walking on the treadmill. It starts off very slowly. If you can walk more than 15m, you should be able to complete the first section of this part. If you cannot do this, please let us know and we will suggest a different test. The speed and slope of the treadmill will increase every 3 minutes. This makes your heart do more work. The test will stop if you have chest pain, become very tired or very short of breath (puffed).

Part 3: After exercise

Once your heart is working hard, the treadmill will stop, you will come back to the bed, and more echocardiogram pictures are taken. The Doctor and Sonographer will then compare these with the resting images taken in part 1, to see if there have been any changes.

Results

The Sonographer and the Cardiologist will write a report and send it to your referring Doctor. You should be able to talk with your Doctor about your results and discuss your next steps.

If we notice anything that needs urgent attention, we will tell you at the time of the test.

Important information

If you have any questions about this test, you can call the Cardiology Department.

Office hours: 8:30am – 5:00pm – Monday to Friday, Phone: (02) 5124 2371

If your call isn't answered, please leave a message with your contact details, and ask for someone to call you back.

This test is bulk billed so you will not have to pay anything. Please bring your Medicare card (or DVA card if you have one). There is a waiting list for this test, if you cannot keep your appointment, or you've had it performed somewhere else, call us as soon as possible.

On the day of your Exercise Stress Echo, please leave plenty of time for parking, and the test usually takes about an hour to complete.

Location:

Canberra Hospital, Yamba Drive, Garran ACT 2605

Cardiology Outpatients, Building 1, Level 3

Acknowledgement of Country



Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this city and region.



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