

Cardiac Diagnostic Services

Treadmill exercise stress electrocardiogram (ECG)

What is it?

A treadmill exercise stress electrocardiogram (ECG) test is used to assess if you are likely to have significant narrowing's in your hearts coronary arteries. A treadmill exercise stress ECG test is also known as a stress test, exercise ECG or treadmill test.

Preparation

Your doctor may ask you to not take certain medications as some of these can affect the accuracy of the test. In particular beta-blockers, which act by slowing the heart rate, need to be stopped before the test. Information about medications will be provided when you book your appointment.

What should I expect?

You will be given a consent form to read and then sign once in the testing room.

The test begins with the Cardiac technologist connecting you to an ECG machine, via ECG electrodes placed directly on the chest, so that your heart rate and rhythm can be monitored and recorded. Then, lying on a couch, a resting blood pressure and ECG recording will be taken before you start exercising.

With the cardiologist present, you will then have the treadmill exercise test. The speed and slope of the treadmill will increase every few minutes, as if you are walking uphill. Your blood pressure will be periodically measured. It is important for you to exercise as long as possible to ensure adequate increased workload on your heart and to provide the most accurate test results.

The cardiologist will look for changes in the ECG and blood pressure levels which may indicate your heart is not receiving enough oxygen due to narrowing's in the coronary arteries. It is important to tell the cardiologist of any symptoms you may experience e.g. chest pain, arm pain or unusual shortness of breath, as you are exercising.

- > Test accuracy is 60-80%.
- > Most treadmill exercise stress ECG tests take about 30 minutes.
- > If any symptoms persist after the test please seek advice from the cardiologist.

After the procedure.

At the end of the test you will have a cool-down period where you may lie down or sit quietly. You may then return to your normal activities.

The results are sent to your referring doctor on the same day. It is recommended that the results and what they mean be discussed with your doctor.