Nuclear Medicine Cardiac Stress Test

This cardiac (heart) stress test assists to determine if there may be significant blockages of the blood supply to the heart and if further testing is needed. The cardiac stress test is done in three parts: First, resting pictures of your heart, then a stress test, and finally a second set of pictures of your heart. It takes about 3 hours to complete. Results will be sent to the provider that ordered your test. It may take a few days for them to contact you.

Part 1: Resting part of the test
The “rest” images will be done before the stress test and will be compared with the others obtained after the stress part of the test. A radioactive material that helps get pictures of your heart will be put in through an IV line in your arm, and pictures will be taken 30 minutes later. You will be asked to lie flat on a table with both arms raised above your head and remain still while the pictures are being taken. The scanner moves slowly around your chest while you lie still. Each picture takes between 25-30 seconds and the entire scan is done in about 15-20 minutes. During the final minutes of the scan the table will slide you a few feet further into the scanner for a short CT scan that will define body structures. This will aid the doctors reading of your scan.

If you are claustrophobic please talk with the Provider referring you for the test to determine if medications may be needed. Some people may experience claustrophobia during the scan.

Part 2: Stress part of the test
There are two ways the “stress” portion of the test can be done.

1. If you are able to walk about five blocks without pain, your heart can be stressed by walking on a treadmill. This workout will start out easy and slowly get harder until you reach your maximum effort. This is known as a treadmill stress test.
2. If you are not able to walk much, one of two drugs can be used to “stress” the heart. These will be given through an IV. This is known as a drug stress test. A combination of drug and treadmill stress test may be used.

For the stress test, small sticky pads will be placed on your chest. The contact of these pads to the skin is important to get a good signal. You may have some discomfort with the preparation of the skin for the pads. These pads will be hooked to an ECG monitor, so that your heart rate and rhythm can be watched closely throughout the test.

Your heart rate and blood pressure will be watched during the stress. Tell the person giving the test if you have any of these symptoms at any time:

- Chest or arm discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness
Another dose of the radioactive material will be put in through the IV line about 1 ½ minutes before the end of the stress test. It is carried to the heart by the blood where it is taken up by the heart muscle.

**Part 3: Final part of the test**

A second set of images will be taken about 30 minutes after your stress test. The pictures are taken just like the resting pictures were.

**How should you prepare for the test?**

- Do not eat or drink for four hours before your arrival time.
  - **If you take insulin,** you should talk to your doctor or clinic to change your dose for the day. If your drive is longer than three hours, it is okay to have a light breakfast of juice and toast before leaving home. If you use a blood sugar meter, please bring it along to the test.
- **Do not have any caffeine 12 hours before the test.** This includes coffee, tea, chocolate, sodas with caffeine, and some medicines that have caffeine.
- Bring pants or shorts that are easy to move in and soft-soled shoes.
- Contact your doctor with questions about any medicine you are on for your heart or blood pressure. Your doctor will have to decide whether to stop them before the test. **If you were told not to take certain medicine, bring them with you, and take them after the test.** If you will be taking medicine during the four hours before the test, you can have a small amount of water.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form for the exercise. This is to ensure you understand any risks of doing a stress test.
- If there are changes to the medications you are taking that have not been updated in our computer, please bring a list of these medications.

**Locations**

Your test will be done at either the University Hospital at 600 Highland Ave, or at The American Center 4602 Eastpark Blvd. Your provider should tell you which location your test will be done.

**Any further questions?**

If you are a UW Health patient and have any other questions or concerns, we will gladly help you with them. You can reach Nuclear Medicine at *(608) 263-1462.* If you are a UW Health patient and live out of the area, call **1-800-323-8942** and ask for the Nuclear Medicine at University Hospital.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2017 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4585