

Stress Echocardiogram (STRESS ECHO)

What is a Stress Echo Test?

- A Stress Echo is a non-invasive test that combines two tests, a treadmill stress test (EST) and an echocardiogram (ECHO).
- An echocardiogram is done at rest prior to exercise and again at peak heart rate.
- The echocardiogram uses sound waves (ultrasound) to provide an image of his heart's internal structures, size and movement. This image is produced by moving a transducer (a very sensitive wand-like device) over the chest area.
- Electrodes are placed on the chest to monitor the heart's rate and rhythm throughout the test.
- The cardiologist will have the patient walk on a treadmill, gradually increasing the speed and incline. The patient will exercise from a few up to 15 minutes depending upon his level of ability.
- The test will be stopped if the patient becomes too tired, has any symptoms such as chest pain.
- The cardiologist will be looking for changes in the ECG pattern and any symptoms that the patient may experience.
- At the peak of exercise, the treadmill will be stopped, and the patient will be instructed to lie down immediately on a bed so that a second echocardiogram can be taken to visualize the heart's motion with exercise.
- The test takes from 30-60 minutes.
- This test must be ordered by a doctor.

Why is a Stress Echocardiogram Done?

- This test will help doctor to evaluate the patient's cardiac condition related to:
 - Irregular heart rhythms
 - If there is a decreased supply of blood and oxygen to the heart at rest as well as with exertion
 - Overall level of cardiovascular conditioning
 - How hard his heart can work before symptoms develop
 - How quickly the heart recovers after exercise

What Preparation is Needed?

- No caffeine or smoking at least 4 hours prior to test.
- It is important for the patient to ask his doctor:
 - how to adjust his insulin and food intake prior to the test if he is a diabetic.
 - if he should take his regular medications the morning of the test.
 - if he is on a Beta Blocker, can he STOP taking this medication 72 hours before the test as this is recommended for best results,.
- Do not apply lotions, oils or powders to the chest area.
- Wear comfortable clothing (shorts or pants with shirt or blouse) and walking or jogging shoes.