

Exercise Stress Echocardiogram Testing (Stress Test/Stress Echo)

Stress Testing Location

Stress Lab Department
St. James Mercy Hospital, 1st Floor
411 Canisteo Street
Hornell NY, 14843

To schedule an appointment: 607-324-2879

To fax to scheduling: 607-324-8221



What is a Stress Echocardiogram?

The patient undergoing a stress echocardiogram (stress test) is generally walking on a treadmill while being observed. A stress echocardiogram is an exercise test that evaluates the heart using both an EKG and an ultrasound machine. An EKG (electrocardiogram) measures the electrical activity of your heart. The heart generates electrical signal which flows out from your heart through your body. Small electrical sensors, called electrodes, are put on your skin to sense the electricity that began in your heart. The electrical activity is then turned into a graph. This can give your doctor an idea of whether your heart is beating normally.

Should I take my medications on the day of the test?

Consult with your physician about what medications you should or should not take on the day of the exam. Often if you're taking medications such as Beta Blockers (such as Atenolol, Coreg, Lopressor, or Inderal) your physician may want you not take this medication on the day of the testing. It's also important to consult with your physician if you're a diabetic, to see if you should change your medication dose on the day of stress testing.

Remember: *Never stop, hold, or discontinue a medication without first talking with your physician first.*

What should I wear on the day of the test?

Please wear or bring comfortable clothes and walking shoes. Please do not bring valuables.

What happens during the test?

- Your test will take place in the stress lab.
- The stress lab is supervised by a physician:
 - First, a cardiac sonographer will gently rub ten small areas on your chest and place electrodes on these areas. Electrodes are small, flat sticky patches that are attached to the EKG monitor. The EKG monitor charts your heart's electrical activity during the testing.
 - Before you start exercising, the sonographer will perform a resting EKG, measure your resting heart rate and take your blood pressure.
 - The sonographer will ask you to lie on your left side on an exam table so he or she can perform a resting echocardiogram. An echocardiogram is a graphic outline of the heart's movement created from ultrasound vibrations echoed from the heart's structures. The sonographer will place a wand, called a transducer, on your chest to view an outline of the heart's movement.
 - After the resting echocardiogram you will exercise on a treadmill. The lab personnel will ask you to start walking and will gradually increase the intensity of the exercise. You will be asked to continue exercising until you're exhausted.
 - At regular intervals, the lab personnel will ask you how you're feeling. Please tell them if you feel chest, arm or jaw pain or any discomfort; shortness of breath; dizziness or lightheadedness; or any symptoms that are not normal for you.
 - The lab personnel will watch for any changes on the EKG monitor that suggest the test should be stopped.
 - When you cannot exercise any longer, you will get off the treadmill, quickly return to the exam table, and lie on your left side so the sonographer can perform another echocardiogram. You may have an IV placed in your arm to use contrast which allows us to visualize your heart better and provide a more accurate test.

How will I feel during the test?

You will be encouraged to exercise until you are tired, can't exercise any further, or have met your target heart rate. It is normal for your heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate and perspiration to increase. As you stop exercising suddenly, it is normal to feel a little unsteady when getting off the treadmill and onto the exam table for the echocardiogram.

How long does the test take?

The appointment will take about one hour. The actual exercise time is usually between 7 – 12 minutes depending on your ability to exercise.