Nuclear Stress Test

Patient Instruction Sheet

Questions? Call the Cardiology Department at (845) 346-0699.

Your Appointment

This test has two parts. The two parts may be completed on the same day or two different days, depending on the patient.

Rest images: _____ **Stress images:** _____

Allow 3–4 hours to complete both parts of the test.

Before Your Test

- **Cancellation:** Give at least 24 hours' notice if you need to cancel. An isotope is ordered specifically for you based on your weight, and you may be responsible for its cost if adequate notice is not provided.
- **12 hours before:** Do not consume any caffeine, including coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, and decaffeinated products.
- **8 hours before:** Do not use nicotine.
- **4 hours before:** Do not eat anything. You may drink water.
- **What to wear:** Wear comfortable shoes and loose-fitting clothing. Do not apply any lotion, oil, cream, or powder to your chest.
- **What to bring:** Bring a snack to eat after the stress portion of the test and any medications you were instructed to hold.

After Your Test

- You may drive yourself home.
- For 12-24 hours after the test, avoid close physical contact with pregnant women and children age 12 and under.
- Schedule an appointment with the doctor who ordered the test for approximately 1 week afterward to review your results. **You will be contacted immediately if a serious problem is detected.**

Medication Instructions

- Review the attached medication sheet.
- Bring any medications you did not take with you to the appointment.
- **If you are unsure whether to take a medication, call the Cardiology Department before your test.**

Important: Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, take ALL of your usual medicines EXCEPT those listed in the Medication Instructions section below.

48 Hours Prior to Test: Do not take any of the following medications:

Medications	
• Aminophylline (Theophylline) • Excedrin • Anacin • Hycomine • Theodur	• Dipyridamole • Fioricet • Norgesic • Aggrenox • Persantine • Fiorinal

24 Hours Prior to Test: Do not take any of the following medications:

Category	Medication names	
Beta blockers	• Acebutolol (Sectral) • Atenolol (Tenormin, Tenoretic) • Betaxolol (Betagen) • Bisoprolol (Zebeta, Ziac) • Carvedilol (Coreg) • Labetalol (Normodyne, Trandate) • Metoprolol Succinate ER (Toprol XL, Kapspargo Sprinkle)	• Metoprolol Tartrate (Lopressor) • Nadolol (Corgard, Corzide) • Nebivolol (Bystolic) • Pindolol (Visken) • Propranolol (Inderal) • Sotalol (Betapace) • Timolol (Blocadren)
Calcium channel blockers	• Nicardipine (Cardene) • Nifedipine (Procardia) • Felodipine (Plendil)	• Verapamil (Veralan, Calan, Isoptin) • Diltiazem (Cardizem, Cartia XT, Tiazac) • Doxazosin (Cardura)
Other medicines	• Isosorbide Mononitrate (Imdur, Monoket) • Isosorbide Dinitrate (Isordil) • Nitroglycerin SL Tablets (Nitrostat) • Nitroglycerin SL Spray (Nitrolingual)	• Nitroglycerin Ointment (Nitro-Bid) • Sildenafil (Viagra) • Tadalafil (Cialis) • Vardenafil (Levitra) • Avanafil (Stendra) • Nitroglycerin Patch (Nitro-Dur, Minitran)

What to Expect

Part 1: Resting Images

Your test has two parts: images of your heart at rest and images after your heart is stressed. You will have waiting periods between the injections and the images. Each part takes approximately 2 hours.

1. **IV and first isotope dose:** A small IV will be placed in your arm or hand. A small amount of radioactive isotope will be injected through the IV. This tracer is used to show blood flow to the heart; it is not the same as contrast dye.
2. **Waiting period:** You will wait while the isotope circulates through your bloodstream and reaches the heart muscle. This usually takes about 45–60 minutes.
3. **Resting pictures:** You will lie still under a special camera while images of your heart are taken at rest. The camera is open and does not touch you.

Part 2: Stress Portion

Before the stress portion begins, electrodes will be placed on your chest and connected to an EKG machine. A blood pressure cuff will also be placed on your arm. Your heart rhythm, heart rate, symptoms, and blood pressure will be monitored during the stress portion and recovery.

Your care team will choose one of the following methods based on your ability to exercise and other medical factors:

Option A: Treadmill Exercise

- You will walk on a treadmill. The speed and incline will gradually increase.
- The goal is to exercise adequately for the test. This is often based on an age-predicted target heart rate, but symptoms, EKG findings, blood pressure, fatigue, and your ability to continue are also considered.
- Many patients exercise for about 5–10 minutes, but your time may be shorter or longer.
- A second dose of radioactive isotope will be injected through your IV near peak exercise.

Option B: Medication Stress with Lexiscan

- If you cannot exercise adequately, Lexiscan (regadenoson) will be injected through your IV. It temporarily opens the arteries and increases blood flow through the heart; it does not make you exercise.
- A second dose of radioactive isotope will then be injected through the same IV.

- You may briefly feel short of breath, warm or flushed, dizzy or lightheaded, nauseated, have abdominal discomfort or a headache, or notice chest discomfort. Tell the nurse immediately about any symptoms. Most reactions begin soon after the injection and improve within several minutes.
- Most patients tolerate Lexiscan well. Trained staff and emergency equipment will be available. If you have a severe or persistent reaction, the clinical team may give a reversal medicine when appropriate.

Important: Tell the nurse immediately if you develop chest pain, severe shortness of breath, faintness, or any symptoms that concern you.

After the Stress Portion

1. **Recovery:** Staff will continue to monitor your EKG, heart rate, blood pressure, and symptoms until you are stable.
2. **Second waiting period:** You will return to the waiting area for approximately 45–60 minutes while the second isotope dose circulates.
3. **Food and medicines:** Once staff tells you the stress portion is complete, you may eat your snack, have coffee or tea, and take the medicines you were instructed to hold. Follow the staff's directions before doing so.
4. **Stress pictures:** You will lie under the camera again for a second set of heart images. Your test is complete after both sets of images have been obtained and staff confirms that no additional pictures are needed.

What Is a Nuclear Stress Test?

A nuclear stress test helps your doctor evaluate blood flow to your heart and look for possible blockages in the coronary arteries. These blockages may be associated with symptoms or findings such as chest pain, an abnormal electrocardiogram (EKG), an irregular heartbeat, or high blood pressure.

Is the Test Safe?

The test uses a small amount of radiation. Please follow these safety precautions:

- Avoid close contact with pregnant women and young children for 12-24 hours after each portion of the test.
- Pregnant patients and nursing mothers should not have this test.
- Patients who are female and younger than age 55 may be asked to provide a urine sample to confirm that they are not pregnant.

Serious complications are rare but may include an abnormal heart rhythm, heart attack, cardiac arrest, or death. During the stress portion, a health care professional trained in cardiology will monitor you closely, and emergency equipment will be available if needed.

How Should I Prepare?

See the attached instructions. Follow them carefully because they may affect the accuracy of your test results. If the instructions are not followed, your test may need to be canceled or rescheduled.

What Happens After the Test?

- Your results will be reviewed at your follow-up appointment. Before leaving your stress test appointment, please make sure your follow-up appointment is scheduled.
- **If your results are abnormal and the doctor needs to see you sooner, our office will contact you directly to schedule an earlier appointment.**

The information obtained from this test is very reliable. However, a normal nuclear stress test does not guarantee the absence of heart disease. If you continue to have chest pain or other symptoms—even after a normal stress test—seek immediate medical attention for further evaluation.