

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A STRESS ECHOCARDIOGRAM

Date of Test: _____ Arrival Time: _____ Time of Test: _____

What is the purpose of a stress echocardiogram?

This test combines an ultrasound of your heart and a stress test. The purpose of the test is to compare the images of the heart muscle before and after it is stressed. In a healthy heart, all areas of the heart pump harder during exercise. Abnormal movement of the heart may mean that there is a blockage in the coronary artery that supplies blood to that area. Abnormal heart wall motion may be seen at rest if there was a previous heart attack. If an artery is only partially blocked, and there has not been any heart damage, the motion of the heart is usually normal at rest, but may be temporarily abnormal during or immediately after exercise.

How should I prepare for my stress echocardiogram?

- ♥ **Please do not eat anything 2 hours prior to the test. You may have juice or water at anytime.** Diabetic patients may have a piece of dry toast and some fruit prior to the test. Consult your doctor as to your insulin dosage on that day.
- ♥ **Take your medications at your usual time**, unless your physician has indicated otherwise. Please bring a list of your current medications, as you may be asked for it.
- ♥ **Wear comfortable footwear** appropriate for brisk exercise on a treadmill.
- ♥ **Family members are allowed to accompany you** to the test, but are restricted to the testing waiting room.
- ♥ **Please shower prior to your appointment** to reduce the spread of bacteria to our equipment.
- ♥ **You total test time will vary, but usually takes approximately 1 hour.**

What will I experience during the stress echocardiogram?

You will be asked to read and sign a consent form. This form provides information regarding the benefits and risks of the stress test. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have.

Your skin will be abraded in preparation for the electrodes that are placed on your chest. If you are allergic to latex, please inform the technician. These electrodes will be hooked up to a monitor so that your heart rate and rhythm can be watched closely throughout the test.

The echo tech will record the baseline echocardiogram while you are rest. You will be asked to lie on your left side and the images will be obtained by placing a transducer on your chest. These images are created by high frequency ultrasound waves that reflect off the different structures of your heart.

The stress portion of your test will be completed with either exercise or medication. Your physician will decide which mode of stress will give the best results.

If your doctor ordered an **exercise stress echocardiogram**, you will use a treadmill. It will start out slowly and gradually increase in speed and/or resistance. Your heart rate and blood pressure will gradually rise. This is normal and both will be monitored along with your EKG. You will be encouraged to exercise for as long as you can, as this will increase the accuracy of the test. If you experience symptoms, such as chest/arm discomfort, unusual shortness of breath, or lightheadedness, immediately inform the exercise physiologist monitoring the test. Immediately following peak exercise, you will move quickly to the examination table. A second echocardiogram will be done while your heart rate is still elevated.

If you are having a **dobutamine echocardiogram**, dobutamine is the medication that will induce stress on your heart. The medication makes your heart beat faster and harder. The dobutamine is infused over 15 minutes and is stopped when a target heart rate is reached. You may feel your heart beat faster. If you experience symptoms, such as chest/arm discomfort, unusual shortness of breath, or lightheadedness, immediately inform the exercise physiologist monitoring the test. During and after the infusion of the medication, the echo tech will image your heart.

When your test is completed, you may be asked to schedule an office visit with your physician to discuss the test results, or your physician may choose to call you with the results. Please do not ask the testing staff for your test results.