



University  
Hospitals Sussex  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Cardiac exercise tolerance testing

Cardiac

Patient information

## What is this information about?

This information is about a test called Cardiac Exercise Tolerance Testing. This test looks at how well your heart works when exercising. This information tells you what happens during the test, how you should prepare for the test, and how you will get the results.

## Why have I been given this information?

You have been referred for this test by your doctor, and there are some things that you need to do prepare. This information will help you to understand what to expect, and how to get ready for the test.

## What is cardiac exercise tolerance testing?

Cardiac exercise tolerance testing is also called a treadmill test or stress test.

It is a test to evaluate how your heart responds to exercise. It helps to assess how well your heart functions when it is made to work harder than usual.

It involves being closely monitored as you exercise, usually on a treadmill, to test if the blood vessels supplying your heart are working properly and to detect any rhythm abnormalities (when something is not right with the rhythm of your heart).

## Why might I need a cardiac exercise tolerance test?

**This test is performed to:**

- Diagnose different heart conditions, such as coronary artery disease. The test does this by seeing how well the blood supply to the heart muscle works, and detecting any rhythm abnormalities.
- See how severe different symptoms are, for example chest pain or shortness of breath.
- Help monitor how you are responding to a treatment and help to work out what levels of physical activity are safe for you.

## What happens during a cardiac exercise tolerance test?

During the test, you will walk on a treadmill while your heart rate, rhythm and blood pressure are monitored.

ECG electrodes (stickers with wires) will be attached to your chest to monitor your heart rate and rhythm. You will have a blood pressure cuff on your arm.

The intensity of the exercise gradually increases. Every three minutes, the speed of the treadmill increases slightly, and the incline (slope) gets slightly steeper.

The test continues until you either reach a target heart rate, develop symptoms, or become too tired to continue.

You will be encouraged to do as much as you can, as the more you do, the more information we get for your doctor.

You may stop the test at any point, but you will not be able to restart it again. If the test is stopped too early, the doctor may not get all the information that they need from it.

## Do I need to make any preparations?

Yes, there are a few preparations you should make for a cardiac exercise tolerance test:

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing and supportive shoes suitable for exercise. We advise good walking shoes or trainers, loose trousers, jogging bottoms, or shorts. There is somewhere private to get changed if you need it.

You will be asked to undress from the waist up to allow us to fit an ECG electrode to your chest. You will be given a hospital gown to wear during the test.

- Long hair should be tied back.
- There are no showers, so you may wish to bring a towel.
- Do not eat a heavy meal two hours before your test. You may wish to bring a drink for after your test, but it must not be a chilled (cold) drink.

- Do not drink alcohol for 12 hours before the test.
- Do not drink tea or coffee on the day of the test unless decaffeinated.
- Bring a list of the tablets you are currently taking and any inhalers. Continue to take your usual medication unless told not to. You may be asked to stop some or all of your heart drugs (especially Beta Blockers) for 48 hours before the test. If so, restart them after the test.

## What happens after the test?

After the test, you will be monitored for a short period to see how your heart recovers. This will be for at least six minutes but may be longer depending on how long it takes your heart rate and blood pressure to settle. You will still be attached to the monitoring equipment.

A detailed report will be made about the results of the test, and the final results will be shared with the doctor who referred you for the test.

## When will I receive the results?

The report will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the test. They will contact you to discuss the results.

If you have any enquiries about your results, please contact the department where the referral was originally made.

## Who can I contact for further information and advice about my appointment?

**Please contact the booking team on: 01273 696955 Ext. 63619**

This information is intended for patients receiving care in Brighton & Hove or Haywards Heath.

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