

If you have any questions, please ask your physician or nurse.

Cardiopulmonary Exercise Stress Testing

The cardiopulmonary exercise stress test shows the responses of your heart, lungs and muscles to exercise. It provides important information about your ability to exercise, including:

- How your results compare with other people of your same age and sex
- How efficiently your body handles exercise
- How your heart and lungs respond normally to exercise

Your physician may use this information to diagnose and treat your symptoms. This test may also help in setting exercise guidelines that are right for you.

Before the test

On the day of the test, plan to arrive 15 minutes before it is scheduled to begin. Take all of your medicines unless told otherwise. If you wear glasses, hearing aids or dentures, please have them with you for the test. Eat a light meal no later than 2 hours before your test. Do not drink coffee, tea or caffeinated beverages on the day of your test.

Be sure to bring:

- Your physician's written order for the test if you received one
- A list of your allergies
- A list of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter and herbal)
- Photo ID
- Medical insurance information
- Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Please wear or bring comfortable clothing and shoes for walking on the treadmill. Patient lockers and showers are available for your use.

Please come to the 8th floor Reception Desk in Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street. Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For a discounted rate, please bring your parking ticket with you. Your ticket can be validated at the Customer Services Desks on the 1st, 2nd and 8th floors of Feinberg and Galter pavilions, and on the 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital.

During the test

The test is divided into 2 parts. You will first have pulmonary function tests (PFTs) done.

PFTs check and measure your ability for these lung functions:

- How easily the air moves in and out of your lungs
- The amount of air your lungs can hold
- How much oxygen your lungs send to the heart

These tests will last about 30 to 60 minutes.

Once the PFTs are done, the exercise portion of the test will begin. This portion of the test will take 45 to 60 minutes. An electrocardiogram (ECG) will be used to monitor your heart rate and rhythm. You will be asked to undress from the waist up and wear either a hospital gown or your own T-shirt. Electrodes (sticky patches) will be placed on your chest. It is important that the electrodes have good contact with your skin, so the electrode placement areas may be shaved if needed. These areas on your chest will be rubbed with a soft pumice gel. Then, they will be cleaned with rubbing alcohol to remove normal skin oils and dirt. This procedure is not painful but may cause some skin redness that goes away within a few hours after the test. Once the electrodes are in place, monitor wires will be attached to each electrode. These wires will be connected to a box worn on a belt around your waist.

You also will be asked to breathe into a plastic mouthpiece. This will be used to collect the air you exhale to check your lung function during exercise. A small clip will be placed on your finger or ear to measure your blood oxygen level.

If blood tests are needed, blood samples will be taken from the artery near your wrist. A small, flexible catheter (tube) may be inserted into the artery and left in place during the stress test.

You will begin exercising slowly, at a low level, and then increase to higher levels of exertion. During the test, your blood pressure, heart rate and ECG changes will be closely monitored.

After the test

You may leave as soon as the test is finished. You may resume your normal activities and diet after the test. The test results will be sent to your physician.

When to seek medical attention

If blood samples were taken from your artery, it is important to watch for bleeding in your arm. If you see any bleeding at the puncture site, apply firm pressure right away to stop it.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have any of these in your arm:

- Bleeding that does not stop even after pressure has been applied
- Swelling or change in color
- Pain, numbness or tingling

If you have questions about this test, please call the Department of Nuclear Cardiology at 312.926.7486, TTY 312.926.6363.