

On the morning of the exam, do not use lotion or powder on your body.

Stress Echocardiogram

A stress echocardiogram (echo) is a test used to detect coronary artery disease (CAD), a blockage of blood flow to the heart. It tests your heart's reaction during periods of rest and exercise. The echocardiogram uses high-frequency sound waves (ultrasound) to look at how the various parts of the heart work. If CAD is present, the stress echo often will note changes in how the heart muscle contracts. The stress echo combines an echocardiogram with the standard treadmill stress test. This provides a more complete picture of the workings of your heart. Allow 1 to 2 hours from arrival until the exam is complete.

Before the test

- Do not eat or drink for 3 hours before the test. Take your usual medicine with small sips of water unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Be sure to take your blood pressure medicine.
- On the morning of the exam, do not use lotion or powder on your body.
- Wear a comfortable, loose-fitting, 2-piece outfit and exercise shoes.

On the day of the test, arrive 15 to 30 minutes before your appointment. Go to the 8th floor, reception desk, in the Galter Pavilion, 201 East Huron Street.

Also be sure to bring:

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

Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For discounted rates, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Service desk on the 1st or 2nd floor of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions or the 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital (including the 24-hour desk near the Superior Street entrance).

Upon arrival

- The test will be explained to you, including its benefits and risks. You will be asked to sign a consent form before the test starts.
- To prepare for the test, you will be asked to undress from the waist up and change into a hospital gown. (A bra cannot be worn since it will interfere with our ability to perform the echocardiogram.)

During the test

Electrodes will be placed on your chest to record an electrocardiogram (ECG) during the test. If necessary, we may need to shave the chest area so the electrodes will stick well. You will lie down on a special exam bed where an echocardiogram will be done before you start the treadmill exercise. A small transducer (probe) coated with a light gel will be placed on your chest to obtain images of your heart. The pictures, recorded on videotape, will be compared to images obtained right after exercise.

You then will exercise on a treadmill. The rate and incline will be increased every 3 minutes. Your blood pressure will be checked every 3 minutes during and after exercise. It is important to walk on the treadmill long enough to show the heart's reaction to varied amounts of work.

Be aware that at the end of the exercise portion of the test, the treadmill will stop abruptly. We will help you move back to the exam bed as quickly as possible to obtain the after-exercise echo. This is vital for a complete test.

After the test

The electrodes and gel will be removed from your chest, and you will get dressed. Showers are available if you wish to take one. You may resume your regular diet.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Department of Noninvasive Cardiac Testing