

Consider an Exercise Stress Test



An exercise stress test measures the heart's response to physical exertion and can give your doctor an idea of how safe it would be for you to exercise and at what intensity you can exercise with relative safety. If you undergo an exercise test, your doctor will ask you to either pedal a stationary bike or walk on a motorized treadmill that increases in speed or grade. Electrodes placed on your chest will monitor your heart activity. Your blood pressure will be monitored, too.

Should you have an exercise stress test? According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, exercise stress testing isn't routinely done to screen for problems, such as coronary artery disease (CAD). Usually, you will have to have symptoms of CAD before a doctor recommends exercise stress testing.

You should check with your doctor about the need for an exercise stress test. In general you may be advised to have an exercise stress test if:

- You plan to start a vigorous exercise program and you are a male over the age of 45 or a female over the age of 55, especially if you have:
 - Diabetes or kidney disease.
 - Very high blood pressure.
 - Very high LDL (bad) blood cholesterol.
 - A family history of heart disease or many risk factors for it.
- You have chest pain during physical activity.
- You have a diagnosed heart ailment, lung disease, or metabolic disorder.
- You feel faint, get a rapid heartbeat, or feel a fluttering feeling in your chest when you exercise.
- You get short of breath at rest or when you exercise.
- You have had an abnormal resting electrocardiogram (ECG).