

# **CALDWELL MEDICAL CENTER**

## **CARDIAC STRESS TEST PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS**

Do not eat, drink or smoke for two hours or more before an exercise stress test. Avoid caffeine or certain medications the day before the test, because they can interfere with certain stress tests. Your Clinician will direct you on specific medications to hold, otherwise, take your medications as usual.

If you use an inhaler for asthma or have other breathing problems, bring it with you to the test. Make sure your doctor and the health care team member monitoring your stress test know that you use an inhaler.

Wear or bring comfortable clothes and walking shoes to the exercise stress test.

When you arrive for your exercise stress test, you will be asked about your medical history and how often you usually exercise. This helps determine the amount of exercise that's appropriate for you during the test.

A technician places sticky patches (electrodes) — which are connected by wires to an electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) machine — on your chest, legs and arms to record your heart's electrical signals. A cuff on your arm checks your blood pressure during the test.

You then begin walking on the treadmill. As the test progresses, the speed and incline of the treadmill increases. You can use the railing on the treadmill for balance.

You will continue exercising until your heart rate has reached a set target or until you develop symptoms that don't allow you to continue.

These signs and symptoms may include:

- Moderate to severe chest pain
- Severe shortness of breath
- Abnormally high or low blood pressure
- An abnormal heart rhythm
- Dizziness
- Certain changes in your electrocardiogram

You may stop the test anytime you're too uncomfortable to continue exercising.

After you stop exercising, you may be asked to stand still for several seconds and then lie or set down for about five minutes with the monitors in place so that they can continue taking BP measurements as your heart rate and breathing return to normal.

When your exercise stress test is complete, you may return to your normal activities for the remainder of the day.

If the information gathered during your exercise stress test shows your heart function to be normal, you may not need any further tests.

If the results of your exercise stress test suggest coronary artery disease or reveal an arrhythmia, the information gathered during the test will be used to help your clinician develop a treatment plan. You may need additional tests depending on the findings.

If the purpose of your exercise stress test was to guide treatment for a heart condition, your doctor will use data from the test to establish or modify your treatment plan, as needed.