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Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram

Stress echocardiography is a test that uses ultrasound imaging to show how well your heart muscles are working to pump blood to your body. It is mainly used to detect a decrease in blood flow to the heart caused by coronary artery disease. For this test, your heart rate will be increased with a drug called Dobutamine. Due to potential difficulty maneuvering yourself on the treadmill, your doctor felt this test was preferred over a performing exercise to increase your heart rate.

How the test is performed

A small intravenous (IV) needle will be inserted in your forearm or hand to allow delivery of Dobutamine. This will increase your heart rate over a period of approximately 20 minutes. You will be lying down, on your left side throughout this test.

A resting echocardiogram will be done first. While you lie on your left side with your left arm up, a small device called a transducer is held against your chest. A special gel is used to help the ultrasound waves get to your heart to make an image.

Your blood pressure, heart rate and rhythm (ECG) will be monitored throughout the entire procedure.

More echocardiogram images will be taken when your heart rate reaches its peak. These images will show whether any parts of the heart muscle do not function properly when heart rate is increased. This is a sign that part of the heart may not be getting enough blood or oxygen due to narrowed or blocked arteries.

How to Prepare for the Test

You may eat a light meal/snack before this testing.

Please bring a list of your current medications.

Stop all betablockers for 48 hours prior to testing. (Betablockers are medications which keep your heart rate controlled, if you are unsure if you are on Betablockers please check with your doctor.)

How the Test Will Feel

Electrodes (conductive patches) will be placed on your chest to record the heart's activity. The preparation of the electrode sites on your chest may produce a mild burning or stinging sensation.

The blood pressure cuff on your arm will be inflated every 3-5 minutes, producing a squeezing sensation that may feel tight. Baseline measurements of heart rate and blood pressure will be taken before exercise starts.

The ultrasound transducer on the chest may feel slightly uncomfortable for some patients.



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Towards the end of the test, you may be asked to squeeze one or two balls and/or perform leg raises to aid in getting your heart rate elevated. The technologists will explain this further.

Sometimes, people experience some of the following during the test:

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Restlessness
- Muscle cramps or weakness
- Chest discomfort or pain
- Dizziness
- Palpitations
- Shortness of breath
- Rash or skin redness
- Bruising at the site of the IV needle

These side effects should subside once the Dobutamine stops being infused.

Why the Test is Performed

Reasons why an Dobutamine stress echocardiogram may be performed to see whether your heart muscle is getting enough blood flow and oxygen when it is working hard (under stress).

Your doctor may order this test if you:

- Have new symptoms of angina or chest pain
- Have angina that is getting worse
- Have recently had a heart attack
- Have had a stress test with unclear results
- Have heart valve problems

The results of this stress test can help your doctor:

- Determine how well a heart treatment is working and change your treatment, if needed
- Determine how well your heart is pumping
- Diagnose coronary artery disease