



Exercise Stress Test (EST)

A photograph of a patient undergoing an exercise stress test. The patient is shirtless, wearing black athletic shorts and a brown belt. They are standing on a treadmill, holding the handrails. Several ECG leads are attached to their chest and arm. A large, semi-transparent grey heart shape is overlaid on the image, partially obscuring the patient's torso and the treadmill. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Patient Information Sheet

What is an Exercise Stress Test?



An exercise stress test (EST) is designed to assess how your heart, lungs and blood vessels respond to increasing workload (exercise). It can help provide information about the level to which you can exercise, if there are any problems affecting your ability to exercise, and how your condition changes with exercise.



Why do I need an Exercise Stress Test (EST)?

Your doctor has decided that your management will be helped by an EST.

There are different reasons why patients may require an EST and these may include:

- ♥ symptoms or signs suggestive of coronary artery disease (CAD), chest pain
- ♥ significant risk factors for CAD such as smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol
- ♥ evaluation of exercise capacity in patients with unexplained shortness of breath or fatigue
- ♥ evaluation of blood pressure response to exercise
- ♥ examination for exercise-induced heart rhythm disturbances (arrhythmias)
- ♥ assessment of your condition after a cardiac procedure such as bypass surgery or coronary angioplasty

What can I expect?

The test will be supervised by a MonashHeart cardiac technologist and doctor. Prior to commencing the test, you will be asked to put on a gown and the technologist will place electrocardiograph (ECG) electrode stickers (heart monitoring stickers) on your chest. These electrodes are attached to cables which link to an ECG machine. This will be looped around your waist with a belt during the test. A blood pressure cuff will be placed around your arm.

You will perform a graded EST. The work level will be advanced in pre-determined stages in order to increase your heart rate. The treadmill will usually begin at a very slow 'warm-up' pace. Every three minutes it will gradually increase in speed and incline (slope).

The test will be stopped if you experience severe chest pain, become very tired or short of breath. Your pulse, blood pressure and ECG are monitored during and after the test. If the supervising doctor is worried about this, the test will be stopped.

You will be asked at times during the test if you have any symptoms such as chest or leg discomfort or shortness of breath. If you feel unwell you should inform us at once.



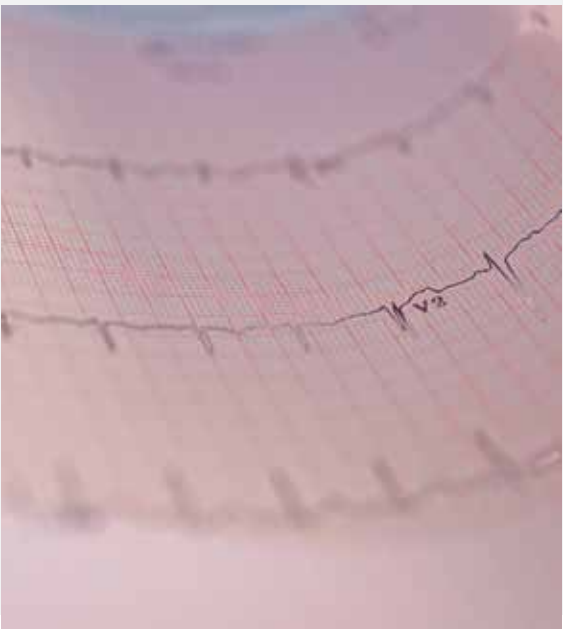
What are the risks?

In recommending this procedure your doctor has balanced the benefits and risks of the test against the benefits and risks of not proceeding. Your doctor believes there is a net benefit of you having an EST.

The procedure is generally very safe however, a few risks include:

- ♥ mild angina eg. chest pain
- ♥ shortness of breath
- ♥ sore muscles or joints
- ♥ fainting (rare)
- ♥ an abnormal heart rhythm that continues for a long time. This may require medication or an electric shock to correct (rare)
- ♥ build up of fluid in the lungs which may need treatment (rare)
- ♥ heart attack (rare)
- ♥ death as a result of this procedure is extremely rare, less than 1 in 10,000 patients

The risks are higher if you already have blocked arteries in the heart (coronary artery disease).



I support MonashHeart, Southern Health in providing leading care to cardiac patients of all ages.

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Thank you for supporting MonashHeart

MonashHeart, Southern Health
is committed to providing
outstanding cardiac services
for cardiac patients of all ages

- ♥ Every 10 minutes, an Australian dies from cardiovascular disease making it the biggest killer of all Australians
- ♥ MonashHeart treats more acute heart attack patients than anywhere else in Victoria
- ♥ Each year MonashHeart treats over 5700 patients with acute heart problems, the most in Victoria
- ♥ MonashHeart operates one of the busiest cardiac CT scanners in the world
- ♥ MonashHeart is the only cardiac service in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania to treat heart patients of all ages; from pre birth to our senior citizens
- ♥ MonashHeart is an internationally and nationally recognised leader in cardiovascular research
- ♥ Nearly one in 100 children in Australia are born with a heart defect. Congenital heart disease accounts for 50% of childhood lethal malformations



Fundraising Manager
Southern Health
Locked Bag 29
Clayton South 3169

How do I prepare?

Specific heart medications may need to be stopped one or two days prior to the test. You will be advised of these instructions in the appointment letter mailed out to you.

You do not need to fast, but it is advisable not to eat a heavy meal before the test. This reduces the likelihood of nausea that may accompany strenuous exercise. We advise that you avoid caffeine for four hours before the test (coffee, tea, chocolate and cola). Please refrain from smoking or alcohol for four hours before the test and avoid heavy physical exertion for two hours prior to this test.

Please ensure you have comfortable clothing, such as tracksuit, shorts, slacks and appropriate walking or sports shoes.

Most patients find they can walk on a treadmill. This includes those who have not done so before and some with mild joint or muscle pains. A general rule is that if you can walk easily, you should manage walking on the treadmill. However, if you believe you will not be able to walk on the treadmill, please contact us well in advance and we can discuss with your doctor about rescheduling a more appropriate test.

Please arrive 15 minutes prior to your appointment. The test itself should last around 30 minutes including recovery time. As a precautionary measure, if you experience chest pain or dizziness during the EST, you may be asked to sit in our waiting room for 10 to 15 minutes after the test.

When does my Doctor get my results?

Your referring doctor will receive the results in five to seven working days. An additional copy of the results may be sent to any other doctors who are involved in your care at your request.

If you have any further questions or concerns about your upcoming exercise stress test, please talk to your referring doctor. On the day of the EST the MonashHeart team will be more than happy to discuss all aspects of the test with you.

At the **Heart** of Care and Innovation

Some useful websites

MonashHeart

www.monashheart.org.au

Patient Information

www.heartfoundation.com.au



Please use this space to write down
any questions you may have:
