

What is a Nuclear Stress Test?

A nuclear stress test involves having pictures of your heart taken at rest (as you are normally) and when the blood supply is increased (at stress). From these sets of pictures, your doctor will be able to determine how well your blood is flowing to your heart muscle when you are exercising and when you are at rest.

Technologists in Nuclear Medicine take pictures of your heart using a Gamma camera. A radioactive tracer (which has no side effects) is injected intravenously into your blood stream that will allow the camera to see your heart. Once you have had your injection of the tracer, you will wait 45 minutes for it to circulate before they take the first set of pictures.

On the second day, the stress test can be done with exercise or drugs. Your heart rate, rhythm of your heart, and blood pressure will be monitored throughout the exercise portion of the test. Once you've hit a pre-determined heart rate (based on your age), you will have the radioactive tracer injected again and the same pictures as day one will be taken about 45 minutes later.

Some patients cannot walk on a treadmill to reach their pre-determined heart rate. For these cases, a medication (Persantine) will be injected through the IV to dilate the coronary arteries instead of walking on the treadmill. You will receive the same radioisotope for this test and the same pictures taken as at rest.

How to prepare for a Nuclear Stress Test?

Rest Date

- Nothing to eat or drink 4 hours prior to test (Diabetics can have some juice/sugar tablet in these 4 hours if necessary)
- Patients are required to bring an up-to-date list of all current medications the day of the **REST** study.

Stress Date

- Nothing to eat or drink 4 hours prior to test **unless** you are **DIABETIC**. (Please discuss any questions regarding this with the technologist during the REST study.)
- **No caffeine within 24 hours of STRESS date.**
 - **Some examples of caffeine:**
 - **Coffee and tea, INCLUDING DECAFFEINATED products.**
 - **ALL soft drinks, INCLUDING DECAFFEINATED and clear ones.**
 - **Chocolate**
 - **Tylenol #1, #2, #3, Ultra (Regular Tylenol acceptable).**
 - **Atasol, Anacin, Excedrin, Migraine medications and cough medications.**

Nuclear Stress Test

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Please check all medication/food labels carefully for caffeine. If there is any caffeine in the product, do not eat or drink it. If you are not sure about your medications, ask your pharmacist. They can let you know.

- **Medications can be taken as normal with water, unless they are indicated to have caffeine.**
- Patients may wear a nitro patch prior to the study and remove upon arrival to hospital.
- Please wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes.
 - Female patients: please wear slacks and a shirt or t-shirt.
 - On your STRESS DATE, you will be asked to change into a gown for the stress portion of the test.

What will happen after the Nuclear Stress Test?

You will be able to resume all normal activities after your nuclear stress test. The radiologist will send the report to your physician. The results will be given to you by your physician.