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EXERCISE STRESS TESTING

Stress tests, whether exercise or other stressor, are performed to document your heart response to various forms of stress (see below). Symptoms, heart rate, blood pressure, ECG findings and any imaging (pictures) findings, are all considered in the interpretation of the test. The results are used to understand the cause of any symptoms and determine if you need treatment with medication, or intervention like a stent or a bypass operation.

- Always bring your Health Card and updated medication list or the actual meds to every visit. For some stress tests you may be asked to reduce or withhold some meds in advance.
- After informed consent, the stress test will begin, using walking or supine bike exercise or medication stress tests using dobutamine or persantine administered via intravenous.
- Eat lightly in the hours preceding the test
- Do not smoke within 2 hours of the test
- You will be hooked up to ECG monitoring equipment and to a BP cuff.
- Exercise or medication will start slowly and be increased to target heart rate or target dose. A Nurse or a Heart Technologist will be at your side continuously, monitoring your heart rate, ECG and blood pressure. The test can be stopped at any time if needed – you will be in constant communication with the staff conducting your test.
- You will be monitored for a period of recovery.

The risk of serious complications of stress testing is low. Expert professional staff are on hand at all times to watch over you and respond to any issues that may arise.

Additional Modalities that may accompany your stress test

Images of your heart may be obtained using **echo** (ultrasound) or **nuclear** camera pictures to provide additional information that aids in interpretation of the exam. Non-exercise modalities can include using medications to simulate exercise – these include dobutamine, an agent that speeds up your heart while pictures are taken, or persantine, an agent that stresses your heart in a different way. Each of these would require an intravenous and injection. If you have a **pacemaker**, that device can sometimes be used to help with a stress test as well. Persantine tests require that you be free of caffeine – coffee, tea, decaf coffee or tea, chocolate and soft drinks for a full 24 hours before your test. It is very important that you comply with this requirement.

Note: Some echo testing images may be enhanced using a Contrast agent. Contrast agents are a special material injected through an IV. They are micro-bubbles that are so small they pass

through the lungs and enter the heart. Image quality is improved in some cases. The contrast agent can be used with resting or stress test studies.