

Nuclear Stress Test

Why Is It Done: You may have a Nuclear Stress Test ordered if you have Coronary Artery Disease or if you have risk factors that indicate the possibility of Coronary Artery Disease.

What Is The Test Looking For: The Main thing the Nuclear Stress Test is looking for is myocardial perfusion. Myocardial perfusion is the blood flow to the muscle of the heart. This test is trying to make certain that the patient has good blood flow at rest and during exercise stress. The test also allows the Cardiologist to see heart size, and wall motion, ensuring the heart is doing its main job well, pumping blood out of the heart.

How To Prepare For The Test:

1. **Do Not Eat or Drink Anything** including gum and breath mints for **at least** 4 hours before the test. Water and brushing your teeth are the only things that are okay.
2. **No Caffeine for at least 12 hours before the test** This Includes Coffee and Tea (regular and decaffeinated) Colas and chocolates. Some over the counter medicines and vitamins also have caffeine.
3. **Do Not Take Your Medications.** Please bring them with you so you can take them when instructed during your testing.

What to Expect on Test Day: Most patients will undergo the following three part stress test.

Part 1. Rest Pictures The test will be explained and a small IV access will be started. The patient will then be given a small amount of nuclear isotope(similar to x-ray) which is not a dye. The patient will lie on a bed with their arms up while the small camera takes pictures of their heart at rest.

Part 2. Stress Either Exercise or Pharmacologic The patient will then undergo physical stress. If possible the patient will exercise on the treadmill . If the patient is unable to exercise sufficiently a medicine will be given that takes the place of the treadmill, but that accomplishes the same purpose (increased blood flow to the heart muscle). This medicine is usually very mild and well tolerated by patients. Either way the patient will then receive a second dose of a nuclear isotope to show increased blood flow under physical stress conditions. The patient will then be given a small snack and allowed to take their medications and then have a small wait time before moving to the final step of the test.

Part 3. Stress Pictures In the final portion of the test the patient will receive a second set of pictures, very similar to the first. After this, the patient will have completed the Nuclear Stress Test. The pictures will be interpreted by a Cardiologist and the patient made aware of the results in a timely manner.