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An exercise stress test (EST) is a test to check the health of the heart when the patient is exercising. It is also called a treadmill test, though sometimes a stationary bicycle is used instead of a treadmill. Exercise makes the heart pump harder, some conditions that can't be detected by an electrocardiogram while at rest can be found by an exercise stress test, which includes an electrocardiogram while the heart is pumping faster.

Depending on where you go for your EST, you may be asked not to eat, drink, or smoke before your stress test.

- There may also be a limitation on caffeine where you may be asked to **avoid caffeine for 24 hours** before the test.
- **If you use an inhaler**, be sure to bring it with you to the test and let your doctor or technician know about it.
- Make sure that your doctor knows about **all medications** that you're taking, including Viagra, Cialis, and Levitra.
- **You may be asked to hold medication for 24 hours before the test, make sure to let your doctor know if discontinuing medication causes chest pain or any other symptoms.**
- Wear comfortable shoes and clothing for the test.

The test may take up to an hour. Patients that undergo an exercise stress test have electrodes attached to their chest and have their blood pressure taken. The electrodes detect arrhythmias, palpitations, and certain indicators of cardiac health. For an EST, you'll likely walk on a treadmill or pedal on a stationary bike. As the test progresses, the exercise will get more difficult. The test ends when the patient reaches a target heart rate, the test also ends if the patient develops symptoms like fatigue, dizziness, chest pain, shortness of breath, or if the patient is too uncomfortable to continue.

If there are any questions that come up in regards to the results of your exercise stress test, call your doctor for clarification.

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