

## YOUR HEART IMAGING TEST:

# What You Should Know



## We'll Be Testing Your Heart

You will be taking a heart imaging test, also known as a cardiac nuclear stress test<sup>a</sup>—it's a very common test for coronary artery disease (CAD). Many people take this test every year. It helps doctors see if there's a problem with your heart without doing surgery.

<sup>a</sup>The technical name of this procedure is myocardial perfusion imaging (MPI).

The heart muscle has an important job. Like other muscles in your body, it needs oxygen and nutrients. The coronary (heart) arteries bring oxygen and nutrients to your heart so it can do its job of pumping blood to your whole body.



Normal  
(healthy)



Clogged  
(unhealthy)

- People with CAD may have 1 or more heart arteries that have become narrowed or blocked over time by fatty deposits called “plaques”
- This can lead to your heart muscle getting less blood

### Less blood flow to your heart can cause:

- Chest pain (called angina)
- Shortness of breath
- Possible heart attack

**An injured part of the heart muscle may be permanently damaged if the coronary arteries stay blocked for too long. If there's a problem, it's very important to know about it as soon as possible.**



You may have 2 sets of pictures taken by the camera at 2 different times (either later that day or even the next day).

## About your heart imaging test

A small catheter (needle) will be placed in a vein in your arm at the start of the test. A cardiac nuclear stress test does not need surgery of any kind. **You'll stay awake and alert the entire time.**



During the test, a tracer (which contains a small amount of radioactive liquid) will be injected into your blood through the catheter.

A special camera will take pictures of your heart once the tracer moves through it. These images give the doctors important details about blood flow into your heart. Your doctors may see that some areas of your heart are blocked and not getting all the oxygen they need.

**This will help your doctors decide what to do next.**

**You and your doctor should talk about the risks and benefits of this test. It's important to let your doctor know if you have any questions or concerns.**

# WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE Day of Your Test



## You'll be monitored during the test



A doctor and at least one nuclear technologist or registered nurse will be overseeing your test.

- Electrocardiograph leads (wires) will be placed on your upper body
- A blood pressure cuff will be used to check your blood pressure

**These are all standard ways to monitor your body during the test.**

## Increasing blood flow to your heart

To help the tracer move through your body and to your heart, doctors need to get more blood to flow to your heart. This is usually done with a special test known as “exercise stress.” You may be asked to walk on a treadmill. After some time, the exercise will become harder.

**It's important to follow the instructions provided by your doctor.** Your heart imaging team will be monitoring you during your test. They may ask you questions to help them find out if your exercise level will create good test results.



While you're exercising, you'll be given the tracer. You may be asked to keep exercising for a few more minutes. After you're done exercising, a special camera will take images of your heart.



## If you take the stress test without exercise

If you're not able to exercise enough to increase blood flow to your heart, your doctor may use a stress medicine instead of having you use the treadmill. This is called "pharmacologic stress." It's a commonly performed test that's done to help create heart images.

### Here's what to expect:

- You may be lying down or sitting in a chair when you receive the medicine
- You'll get some injections through the catheter in your arm—these injections include the stress medicine and the tracer

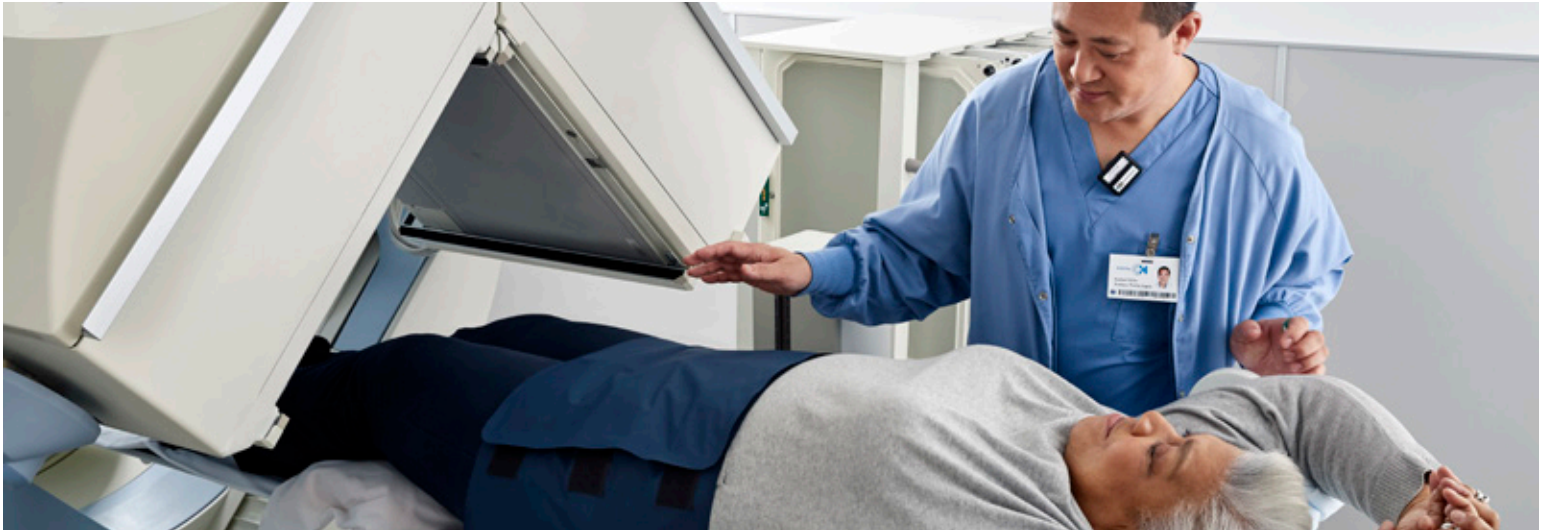
You'll feel the effects of the stress medication very quickly. You may feel flushed, chest pressure or pain, shortness of breath, or some other mild discomfort. These effects are common, but if you're not expecting them, they may surprise you at first. **Be sure to tell the doctor or lab staff how you're feeling.**

Whether you get exercise stress or stress medicine, the goal is the same: to increase blood flow to your heart so that the tracer can spread throughout your heart. This helps create good images in order to find the clogged arteries.

**Now you're ready for the images to be taken.**

FOR THE DOCTOR TO GET

# Good Images of Your Heart...



## Just relax and lie still

The goal is for you to be as comfortable as possible during the test. You may still be feeling the effects of the stress medicine when you're ready for the images to be taken. That's okay.

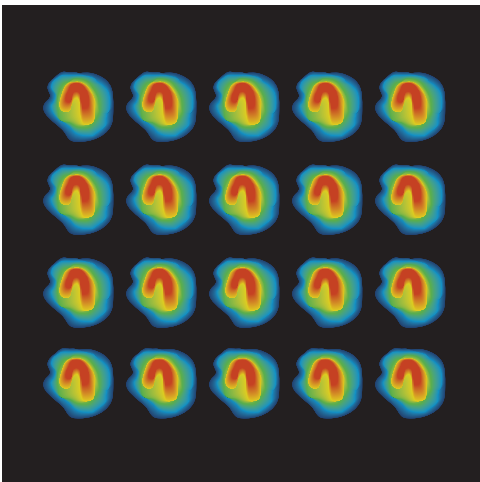
During the imaging part of the test, you may be asked to rest on your back with your arms above your head.

It's important that you're comfortable so you can be as still as possible. The camera is big, but don't worry. It won't touch your body and it doesn't hurt.

No radiation comes from the camera. It's painless and safe, so try to stay still for the best test results.

One set of images will be taken after the treadmill exercise or after you've been given the stress medicine.

Another set may be taken while you're at rest. (The images may also be taken in the opposite order. Your doctor will decide.) The second set may be taken a few hours after the first, or even the next day. It just depends on the kind of test your doctor has ordered.



Example images from a cardiac nuclear stress test.

### What happens next?

The nuclear cardiologist or radiologist will look at the images with the doctor who ordered the test. When you meet with your doctor, you'll talk about the results and what happens next.

**You may need some lifestyle changes, medications, or maybe more testing.**

## EXAM APPOINTMENT REMINDER

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## GETTING READY FOR YOUR Heart Imaging Test

Here are some steps you can take to get ready before the day of your test—check each item as you prepare for your test.

Ask your doctor if you should avoid certain foods or drinks before your test.



Ask your doctor if you should stop taking any of your usual medicines.



Do not eat, drink, or take anything with methylxanthines, ie, caffeine and theophylline, for at least 12 hours before the test. Certain ingredients in foods and medications may interfere with the test. **See the tables on the next page for a list of some things you should avoid.**



Wear comfortable clothing and shoes.



Tell your doctor if you have a history of wheezing, asthma, or lung disease that keeps coming back.



Tell your doctor if you've ever had a seizure.



**Remember to relax and stay still—if you move too much, the picture may not turn out right.**

## BEFORE YOUR TEST

# What to Avoid

**This is NOT a complete list.** Ask your doctor so you can be sure which other items you should avoid before your test.

### Drinks to avoid



- Coffee (brewed, instant, iced, decaf)
- Tea (brewed, instant, iced, decaf)
- Soda pop (including “caffeine-free”)
- Energy drinks
- Chocolate milk (or chocolate-flavored drinks, including nutritional drinks)
- Hot cocoa

### Foods to avoid



- Brownies
- Chocolate pudding, cakes, and candies
- Energy bars

### Some medicines to avoid



Over-the-counter drugs with caffeine	Prescription drugs with caffeine	Prescription drugs with dipyridamole (do not take for 48 hours)	Prescription drugs with theophylline
Anacin® (aspirin, caffeine)	Cafergot® (ergotamine tartrate, caffeine)	Aggrenox® (aspirin, dipyridamole)	Elixophylline® (theophylline)
Excedrin® (acetaminophen, aspirin, caffeine)	Esgic® (acetaminophen, butalbital, caffeine)	Persantine® (dipyridamole)	Theo-24® (theophylline)
Vivarin® (caffeine)	Fioricet® (acetaminophen, butalbital, caffeine)		
NoDoz® (caffeine)	Fiorinal® (butalbital, aspirin, caffeine)		

**Looking for more support? Register at [StressTestCoach.com](https://www.stresstestcoach.com) to help you get ready for your heart imaging test.**