Stress Test, Cardiovascular

A cardiovascular stress test is done to help determine the presence of coronary artery disease (CAD). A stress test is done while you are walking on a treadmill. The goal of an exercise stress test is to raise your heart rate. This will help determine whether your heart can supply itself with enough blood during increased exercise. People with CAD may experience symptoms such as:

- Chest pain.
- Shortness of breath.
- Arm pain. This usually occurs in the left arm but can occur in the right arm.
- Forceful or irregular heart beats (*palpitations*). This may occur with or without dizziness upon activity.
- Unusual sweating at rest or profuse sweating with light activity.
- Associated nausea with the above symptoms.

INSTRUCTIONS PRIOR TO YOUR STRESS TEST

- You should not eat or drink for 4 hours prior to your stress test or as told by your caregiver.
- This test involves walking on a treadmill. Wear loose fitting clothes and comfortable shoes for the test.
- Arrive 1 hour before the test or as told by your caregiver.

PROCEDURE OF AN EXERCISE STRESS TEST

- Many sticky patches (*electrodes*) will be put on your chest.
  - If you have a hairy chest, small areas may have to be shaved to make better contact with the electrodes.
  - Once the electrodes are attached to your body, wires will be attached to the electrodes, then to an electrocardiogram (ECG) machine.
  - The ECG machine will record your heart rhythm. Specific heart rhythm changes will be noted on the ECG printout.
- While you are walking on the treadmill, your heart and blood pressure will be monitored.
- The treadmill will be started at a slow pace. The treadmill speed and incline will gradually be increased to raise your heart rate.
- The test can be expected to last between 1 and 2 hours. You will need to be monitored after the test to make sure your heart rate and blood pressure are okay before you go home.

THE STRESS TEST MAY BE STOPPED IF:

- You develop an abnormal heart rate or a very fast heart rate.
- You develop chest pain.
- You develop high or low blood pressure.
- You develop shortness of breath.
- You feel dizzy.

WHAT DOES AN ABNORMAL RESULT MEAN AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- An abnormal stress test can indicate significant coronary artery disease (CAD). CAD is defined as narrowing in 1 or more heart (*coronary*) arteries of more than 70%.
- If you have an abnormal stress test, this does not mean your are not getting blood flow to your heart. It only means more testing is needed to understand why your test was abnormal. A common follow up test is a coronary angiogram.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS OF YOUR TEST

- Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an

appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

At any time after the stress test you develop:

- Chest pain.
- Pain radiating down your left arm.
- A feeling of being sick to your stomach (*nausea*).
- Vomiting.
- Fainting or shortness of breath**.**

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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