Nuclear Dobutamine Stress Test

A Nuclear Dobutamine Stress Test is a test used to check for heart disease in people who are unable to exercise on a treadmill. Dobutamine is a medication that stimulates the heart and will cause your heart to beat harder and more quickly, as if you were exercising. The term "nuclear" refers to several types of radioactive tracers (*isotopes*). The tracer is given either by an IV (*intravenous*) injection or it may be swallowed. The tracer is then absorbed by the body. The tracer allows the heart arteries to be seen by a special camera. A nuclear dobutamine stress test can help detect blockages in the major arteries of the heart.

PREPARATION FOR TEST

- You should arrive 15 minutes prior to your test or as directed by your caregiver. You will need to fill out paperwork and sign consent forms for the test.
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes.
- Do not apply lotions, powders, creams or oils on your chest prior to the dobutamine stress test.
- Follow your caregiver's instructions regarding eating and drinking before the test.
- Do not smoke for 4 hours prior to the test.
- Take your medications as directed at regular times with water unless instructed otherwise. If you are on insulin, ask how you are to take it and if there are special instructions. It is common to adjust insulin dosing the morning of the test.
- Beta blocker medications interfere with the test. If you are on a beta blocker, do not take this medication for 72 hours before the test unless your caregiver instructs you otherwise. Be sure to ask if you do not understand. This MUST be discussed with your physician prior to your appointment.
- If you wear a nitroglycerin patch, it may need to be be removed prior to the test. Ask your caregiver if the patch should be removed before the test.
- This test may take several hours, much of the time is spent waiting. It may be helpful to bring a good book.

PROCEDURE.

- The test will be explained before or at the time of your test.
- Multiple electrodes will be put on your chest. If you have a hairy chest, small areas may have to be shaved to get better contact with the electrodes. Once the electrodes are attached to your body, multiple wires will be attached to the electrodes. These are attached to an (EKG) machine. The EKG will monitor your heart's rate and rhythm (regularity).
- An IV line will be started and Dobutamine will be administered. Some common side effects of dobutamine include shortness of breath and nausea.
- Usually, 2 injections of isotope are given and two scans are obtained. One of these injections is given during the dobutamine infusion. The other injection is done at rest. Some facilities do not always perform a rest scan if the stress images are normal. The isotope is absorbed by healthy heart muscle and makes the heart visible to the scanner, a gamma camera. The isotope should cause no reactions.
- Depending on the isotope used, images of your heart will be obtained 5 to 60 minutes after each dose. If Thallium is used, which is a specific isotope, a set of images are obtained 3 or 4 hours later. Most but not all cameras rotate slowly around you as you lie on a narrow table with your left arm over your head. Most cameras take 10 to 30 minutes to take the picture.
- If it looks like your heart is not getting enough blood to areas of the heart or an abnormal rhythm occurs, the test may be stopped. The test may also be stopped if your blood pressure becomes higher than the normally accepted ranges.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Resume your pre-hospital medications and diet unless instructed otherwise.
- Keep your follow-up appointments as instructed.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOU DEVELOP

- Pain or pressure in the following areas:
  - Chest.
  - Jaw or neck.
  - Between your shoulder blades.
  - Pain radiating down your left arm.
- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach).
- Vomiting.
- Fainting.
- 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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