

Children's Exercise Tolerance Test

Information for patients, parents and guardians

This leaflet provides information about your child's forthcoming appointment so that you know what to expect and can help prepare your child. We'll go into more detail during the appointment and you'll both be able to ask any questions that you may have.

Having an exercise tolerance test

An exercise stress test aims to assess your child's tolerance and response to exercise of different intensity. This test is also referred to as a 'stress test', an 'exercise test' or a 'treadmill test'. It is a useful test for a number of heart conditions, and is performed in hospital to allow the child to be exercised with increasing intensity in a closely monitored environment.

Preparing for the appointment

Your child should continue to take all of their usual medications, unless stated otherwise in the appointment letter. They'll need to wear comfortable clothes and footwear suitable for doing exercise and you'll need to bring a list of their current medication with you to the appointment. On the day your child should come in well rested.

We advise that they avoid drinks with caffeine in (such as tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks) as they may affect the results. Other fluids can be continued up to the start of the test, but they shouldn't eat a heavy meal within two to three hours of the test.

If your child is female and they are (or could be) pregnant, then contact the department as it may not be advisable to proceed with the test.

At the appointment

Your child's exercise tolerance test will be supervised by a doctor and cardiac physiologist.

Before the test starts, your child will be weighed and we will explain all of the equipment and testing process in more detail.

During the test, stickers (called electrodes) will be put onto your child's chest to monitor their heart rate and rhythm with an electrocardiogram (ECG). A blood pressure cuff will be put on their arm also, to take their blood pressure. And we will monitor your child's symptoms to ensure there are no problems throughout.

For this test they'll be asked to walk on a treadmill which begins at a gentle speed and incline. We'll encourage them to walk for as long as they can on the treadmill whilst their body's response to exercise is assessed. The intensity of the exercise will be increased slowly. They'll need to exercise to the best of their ability, but there is no set end point to the test and it can be stopped at any time.

When they have completed the exercise they'll be monitored whilst they rest and their body recovers. We recommend that you both remain in the department waiting room for at least 10 minutes after the test to allow them time to fully recover.

Although exercise isn't harmful, this test checks your child's heart as it works at varying intensities of exercise, so some shortness of breath and muscle fatigue is to be expected.

The exercise part of the test takes about 20 minutes to complete, but the entire test takes about 45 minutes.

In most cases, parents may stay in the room during the test.

The results

Results of the test will need to be analysed. We'll send the results to the doctor who requested the test, usually your hospital consultant. You may be given the results of this test during your child's next clinic appointment with their hospital consultant, or you may receive a letter. If you are unsure please ask during your appointment.

Further information

If you would like further information please contact your hospital consultant through their secretary (can be contacted via hospital switch board on **01392 411611**), or the Cardiac Physiology team on **01392 406087**.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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