



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

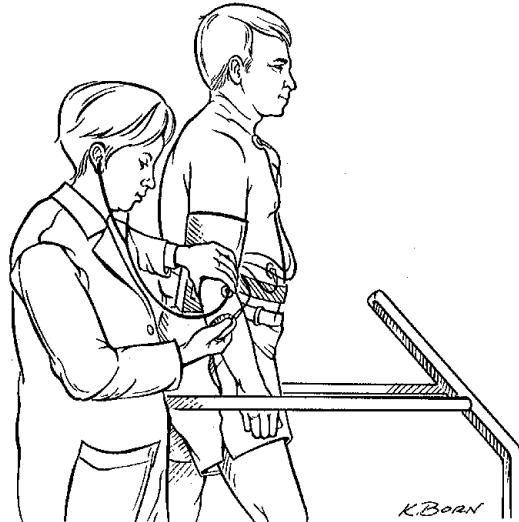
*Learn and Live.*

# What Is a Stress Test?

## Why do I need a stress test?

A stress test, sometimes called a treadmill test or exercise test, helps your doctor find out how well your heart handles work. As your body works harder during the test, it requires more fuel and your heart has to pump more blood. The test can show if there's a lack of blood supply through the arteries that go to the heart.

Taking a stress test also helps your doctor know the kind and level of exercise that's right for you.



The results of your stress test may help your doctor decide if you have heart disease, and if so, how severe it is.

## What happens during the test?

- You're hooked up to equipment to monitor your heart.
- You walk slowly in place on the treadmill.
- It tilts so you feel like you're going up a small hill.
- It changes speeds to make you walk faster.
- You may be asked to breathe into a tube for a couple of minutes.
- You can stop the test at any time if you need to.
- After slowing down for a few minutes, you'll sit or lie down and your heart and blood pressure will be checked.

## What is monitored during the test?

- Your heart rate
- Your breathing
- Your blood pressure
- Your electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)
- How tired you feel

## What equipment is used?

The electrocardiography machine will record your heartbeat and heart waves in an electrocardiogram (ECG). Wires, or electrodes, will be hooked up to your chest and arms or shoulders. The wires are connected to the ECG machine.

- Near the end, you may breathe into a mouth-piece that will measure the air you breathe out.

## Is there a risk?

- There's very little risk — no more than if you walked fast or jogged up a big hill.
- Medical professionals are on hand in case anything unusual happens during the test.

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.

3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

## What are the warning signs of heart attack and stroke?

### Warning Signs of Heart Attack

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- **Chest discomfort**
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body**
- **Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort**
- **Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness**

Call 9-1-1 ... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

### Warning Signs of Stroke

- **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
- **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
- **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
- **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
- **Sudden, severe headache with no known cause**

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Could it give me a heart attack?

---

Will I need more tests?

---

Your contribution to the American Heart Association supports research that helps make publications like this possible.

**The statistics in this sheet were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at [americanheart.org/statistics](http://americanheart.org/statistics).**

©2007, American Heart Association 10/07LS1466