



## Cardiac Testing

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q:** What is a Nuclear Stress Test?

**A:** A nuclear stress (myocardial perfusion) test helps to determine which parts of the heart are healthy and function normally and which are not. A very small and harmless amount of radioactive substance is injected into the patient. Then the doctor uses a special camera to identify the rays emitted from the substance within the body; this produces clear pictures of the heart tissue on a monitor. These pictures are done both at rest and after exercise. Using this technique, a less than normal amount of the substance will be seen in those areas of the heart that have a decreased blood supply.

**Q:** What is Lexiscan?

**A:** Lexiscan is a medication used to dilate the coronary arteries to allow increased blood flow to the heart. It is used to increase the heart rate ***instead*** of walking on a treadmill. Lexiscan could cause a temporary feeling of warmth and flushing.

**Q:** What are the side effects to Lexiscan?

**A:** A small percentage of people may experience chest discomfort, a feeling of breathlessness, nausea or headache. These side effects usually go away quickly once the infusion is complete.

**Q:** What will happen during my Lexiscan?

**A:** You lie down, an EKG monitor; blood pressure monitor will be attached to you. The Lexiscan is given over 15 seconds through a small IV. After the medicine is given, a nuclear medicine technologist will inject a dose of radioactive isotope (imaging material).

**Q:** What is a Gastric Emptying study?

**A:** A gastric emptying study is a procedure that is done by nuclear medicine physicians using radioactive chemicals that measure the speed with which food empties from the stomach and enters the small intestine. Gastric emptying studies are used for testing patients who are having symptoms that may be due to slow and, less commonly, rapid emptying of the stomach.

**Q:** What is a Bone Scan?

**A:** A bone scan is a nuclear scanning test that identifies new areas of bone growth or breakdown. It can be done to evaluate damage to the bones, find cancer that has metastasized to the bones, and monitor conditions that can affect the bones, including infection and trauma. A bone scan can often find a problem days to months earlier than a regular x-ray test.

**Q:** What will happen during my bone scan?

**A:** You will be injected with a radioactive tracer. The tracer travels through the bloodstream and into the bones. This process may take several hours. A gamma camera then takes pictures of the tracer in the bones. This helps show cell activity and function in the bones.

**Q:** What is an Echocardiogram?

**A:** An echocardiogram (echo) is an imaging procedure that creates a moving picture outline of the heart's valves and chambers using high-frequency sound waves that come from a hand-held wand placed on your chest. Echo is often combined with Doppler ultrasound and color Doppler to evaluate blood flow across the heart's valves. Doppler senses the speed of sound and can pick up abnormal leakage or blockage of valves.

**Q:** What is a Stress Echocardiogram?

**A:** An exercise stress echocardiogram (stress echo) is a procedure that combines echocardiography with exercise to evaluate the heart's function at rest and with exertion. Echocardiography is an imaging procedure that creates a picture of the heart's movement, valves, and chambers using high-frequency sound waves that come from a hand-held wand placed on your chest. Echo may be combined with Doppler ultrasound and color Doppler to evaluate blood flow across the heart's valves

**Q:** What is an Exercise Stress Test (ETT)?

**A:** An exercise stress test is used to provide information about how the heart responds to stress. It involves walking on a treadmill at increasing levels of difficulty, while the electrocardiogram, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored.

**Q:** What is an Event/Loop Monitor?

**A:** An event monitor (loop recorder) is a small recorder (monitor) that is attached to electrodes on your chest. It is worn continuously for a period of time. If symptoms are felt, an event button can be depressed, and the heart's rhythm is recorded and saved in the recorder. The rhythm can be saved and transmitted over the phone line.

**Q:** What is a Holter Monitor?

**A:** A small recorder (monitor) is attached to electrodes on your chest. It records the heart's rhythm continuously for 24 to 48 hours. After the monitor is removed, the heart's beats are counted and analyzed by a technician with the aid of a computer. Your doctor can learn if you are having irregular heartbeats, what kind they are, how long they last, as well as what may cause them.