

What is a stress echo?

The stress echo test uses an electrocardiogram (EKG) and an echocardiogram (ultrasound) to evaluate your heart's performance at rest and under stress while exercising on a treadmill.

TESTING HEART HEALTH



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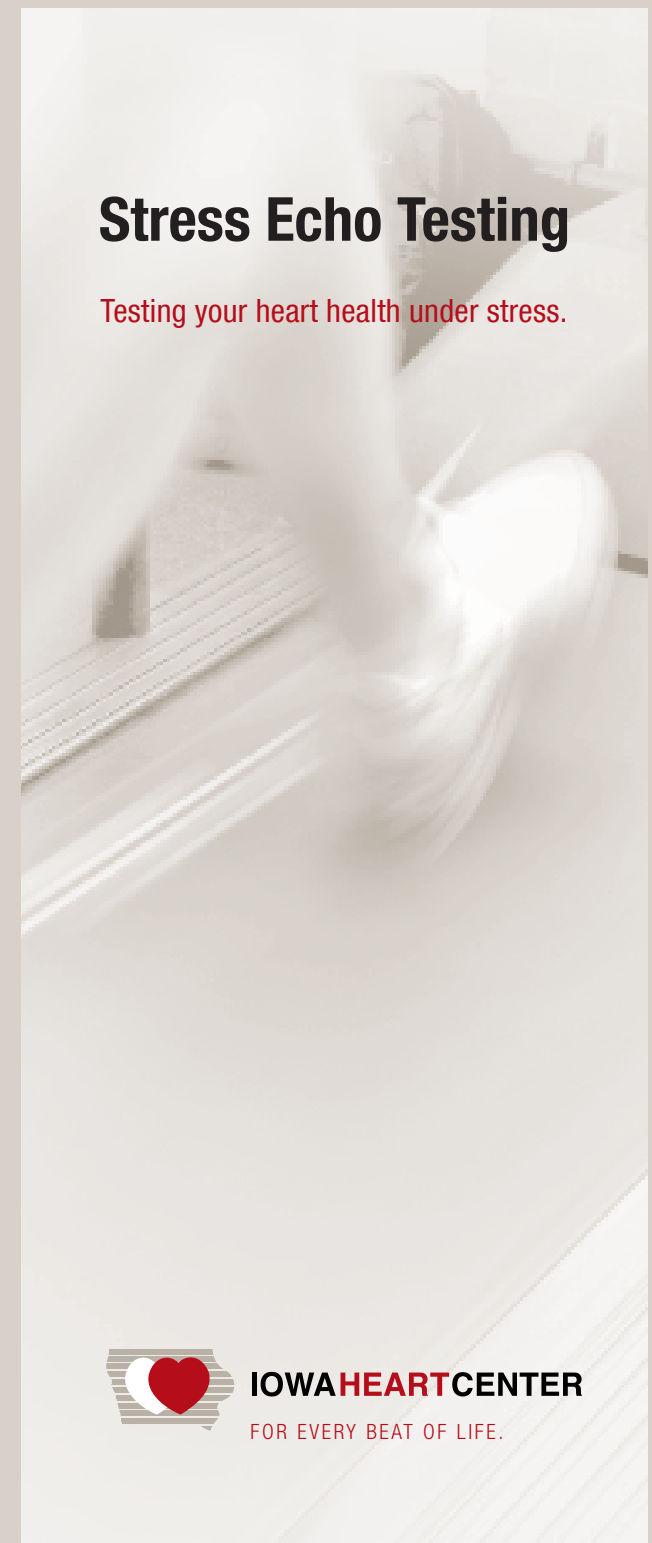
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Stress Echo Testing

Testing your heart health under stress.



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It's often said that you can't know what an individual is made of until you see them under stress. And the same can be said for your heart. Having a stress echo test done at the Iowa Heart Center can help you and your doctor better understand your risk for heart disease and other cardiac-related health problems.



WHY DO I NEED A STRESS ECHO?

Many people with heart problems have no symptoms when they are resting or going about daily activities. Exercising the heart stresses it, causing specific changes that can be tracked using a combination of two methods: an electrocardiogram (EKG), and an echocardiogram (ultrasound). Through these methods, your doctor can determine if you need more cardiac tests and/or treatment.

A stress echo may be ordered to determine if you have heart disease, problems with heart valves, or to follow progress after a heart attack or bypass surgery.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE TEST?

A stress echo test is a simple, non-invasive procedure involving a number of tests taken while at rest (lying down or standing still) and while exercising on a treadmill.

Step 1: A series of electrodes will be placed on your chest and an EKG will be taken to determine your heart's health, rate, and rhythm. You will then be asked to lie on your left side and resting images of your heart muscle will be obtained using an ultrasound.

Step 2: While walking on the treadmill, the technician will take your blood pressure and a standing EKG. The treadmill will get steeper and faster every three minutes. Blood pressure and EKGs will be taken periodically during that time. You will not be on the treadmill for any specific length of time, rather the test lasts until you've reached your maximum predicted heart rate.

If you should experience any symptoms (i.e.: arm or chest discomfort, dizziness, marked shortness of breath, or marked fatigue) while you are exercising, please inform your testing staff.

Should you be unable to perform the treadmill test, a drug called dobutamine will be used to induce effects on your heart rate similar to the treadmill.

Step 3: Once your "peak heart rate" has been reached, more ultrasound pictures are taken of your heart while you rest.

Step 4: Your doctor will review the EKGs and ultrasound images (before and after stress) and a nurse from the ordering physician's office will call you with the results in one to two days.

COMMON QUESTIONS:

What should I wear?

Since you will be walking on a treadmill, we ask that you wear comfortable pants and good walking shoes.

How long will the test take?

Plan to be in the office for 45-60 minutes. The length of the stress portion is dependent upon how quickly you can reach your target heart rate.

Will I be able to drive after the test?

Whether you walk on the treadmill or have the medicine test, you will be able to drive yourself home after the exam.

What if I'm on medication?

Bring a list of your current medicines with you. Do not take any beta blockers for 24 hours before your stress test. If you are diabetic, you may ask your primary physician about your insulin.