

Executive Health Checks

GP-REFERRED EXERCISE ECG TESTING

October 2024

Executive Health Checks at the San GP Centre offers patients the facility to have a GP / Physician-referred, Medicare-rebatable Exercise Stress ECG performed.

Please bring along a change of clothes, eg shorts, T-shirt and sports shoes, in which to do the treadmill test. You may also wish to bring a towel, as shower facilities are available.

This test is usually used to assess the cause or origin of chest pain / discomfort, and whether it is cardiac-related. It can also:

- provide a check as to the patients' ability to attempt vigorous exercise safely (eg. trek the Kokoda Track)
- be a prerequisite for many jobs, especially after the age of 40 (eg. Commercial pilot)
- be used to assess the non-symptomatic at-risk vascular patient (eg. a 50 year old with a strong family history of heart disease)
- be indicated in patients with palpitations; loss of stamina; unexplained shortness of breath (especially with exertion); vague/hard to explain symptoms who have one or more risk factors for vascular disease; and those wishing to commence a vigorous exercise regime over 40 years of age.

The test is performed on a motorised treadmill using the "Bruce Protocol" whereby the gradient is increased every 3 minutes by 2% (starting at 10%), whilst speed goes from a slow walk (2.7km/h) to a jog at 12 minutes (8km/h). Most patients complete the test in 9-12 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of monitored recovery/cool down (seated). Blood pressure & Heart ECG are monitored throughout the test. A doctor and cardiac-trained Registered Nurse (plus resuscitation equipment) are also present throughout the test.

A report is prepared along with copies of the ECG provided immediately for either the patient to return to their referring physician or to be mailed or faxed. An abnormal result is directly communicated to the referring doctor.

INFORMATION ON TREADMILL EXERCISE / STRESS TESTING

The Stress Test

You have the right to know what to expect in any medical procedure and any associated risks. Your doctor has referred you for an Exercise Stress Test/Exercise ECG, otherwise commonly called a "Stress Test". This is a frequently used cardiac diagnostic test to assess how the heart performs during exercise, which can assist in determining a wide range of heart conditions. It records the heart's electrical activity (rate and rhythm) during exercise, producing a graph. A healthy person's heart electrical activity has a particular pattern, and our doctor can identify changes in that pattern which MAY indicate there is a problem with your heart.

The test involves a preliminary resting Electrocardiograph (ECG) followed by walking exercise on a treadmill with continuous ECG, heart rate and blood pressure monitoring. The treadmill begins at a very slow speed (2.7km/h) and every three minutes our staff will increase the speed and slope of the treadmill, as if you are walking uphill. The doctor will look for changes in electrical activity patterns, blood pressure levels and any symptoms you may be experiencing.

Who Conducts the Test?

The technicians are fully qualified nurses trained in this particular procedure and with cardiopulmonary resuscitation training. Emergency equipment is immediately at hand. Our doctor is present in the room and a medical resuscitation team is always available in the SAH Emergency Department, located in close proximity to the Centre. Be assured you will be continuously monitored by our experienced doctor and nurses.

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How Is It Done?

You will usually be on the treadmill for a maximum of 9 to 12 minutes or until you reach 90-100% of your maximal heart rate (determined by your age, gender and weight). The test will be stopped if you become too tired or have any symptoms such as chest pain or shortness of breath, or if the Doctor feels it is appropriate.

It is important that you mention any discomfort you may experience, especially chest pain/tightness/discomfort (however minor), arm, neck or jaw ache, breathlessness or lightheaded/dizziness.

Immediately after finishing on the treadmill an ECG reading is taken without movement. Finally there is a cool-down phase where you sit while your heart returns to its resting heart rate. This will last approximately 4 - 5 minutes. The total test duration including preparation and removal of equipment is approximately 30 minutes.

How Will I Feel?

Your legs may feel unsteady momentarily on stepping off the treadmill. A very small number of people briefly feel lightheaded or dizzy. You will probably sweat, perhaps profusely, as you would after any vigorous exercise. You may have joint or muscle soreness depending on any predisposing problem, as you would expect from any physical activity.

Are There Any Risks?

Please follow instructions and keep us informed about how you feel and what you would like to do.

Very occasionally an abnormal rise in blood pressure or a potentially serious disturbance/rhythm may occur and result in us stopping the test.

Serious complications are extremely rare. There is a theoretical risk of cardiac arrest (1 in 10,000 chance) or heart attack (myocardial infarction, 1 in 2,500 chance) as in any pre-disposed person who indulges in strenuous exercise.

If the test reveals you are at very high risk we may organise immediate referral to a Cardiologist. Also, if your Resting ECG indicates recent heart damage, we may decline to test you and instead organise immediate referral to a Cardiologist.

If the test reveals your condition is very serious, you may need direct admission to the hospital immediately following the test (very rare).

BOOKING YOUR APPOINTMENT

Having read this information, if you wish to proceed with stress testing you will be asked to sign a consent form prior to commencing the test.

Please phone **02 9480 9700** to book your appointment, or for further information.

Appointments are available on Wednesdays and Thursdays, at 4.00pm and 4.30pm.

COST OF EXERCISE ECG TESTING

For most patients, the cost of the Exercise ECG Test is \$370, and this is payable on the day of the test.

A referral is required from your Physician or GP to claim a Medicare rebate of approximately \$200.

The cost to Pensioner Concession Cardholders is discounted, while Gold card Veteran Cardholders sign the DVA assignment form.

OUR LOCATION

San GP Centre (within Sydney Adventist Hospital)
Suite 202, San Clinic Tulloch, 185 Fox Valley Road
Wahroonga, NSW, Australia, 2076

Phone: +61 2 9480 9700

Fax: +61 2 9480 9733

Email: info@ehc.org.au

See the San GP Centre [website](#) for location and parking information.