

Preparing for Your Cardiac Tests

Echocardiogram · Stress Test · ECG · Holter Monitor



This guide explains what to expect — and how to prepare — for the heart tests we may arrange for you. If you receive specific instructions from our office, those always come first.

— Echocardiogram (heart ultrasound)

What it is: A painless ultrasound that uses sound waves to create moving pictures of your heart's chambers, valves, and pumping function. There is no radiation.

How to prepare

- No special preparation — eat and take your medications as usual
- Wear comfortable two-piece clothing

During (about 30–45 minutes): You lie on your left side while a technologist moves a small probe with gel across your chest. You may be asked to shift position or briefly hold your breath. **After:** You can return to normal activities right away; your cardiologist reviews the images.

— Exercise Stress Test (treadmill / ETT)

What it is: Your heart's rhythm, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored while you walk on a treadmill that gradually speeds up and inclines, to see how your heart performs with exertion.

How to prepare

- Wear comfortable clothing and proper walking or running shoes
- Have only a light meal beforehand, and avoid caffeine for several hours (it can affect the results)
- Bring a list of your medications
- Your physician may ask you to stop certain heart medications before the test — follow the specific instructions you are given
- If you use an inhaler, bring it; if you have diabetes, ask us how to manage food and medication that day

During (about 30–60 minutes total): You walk until you reach a target level or develop symptoms. Trained staff watch you closely and can stop the test at any time. **After:** You're monitored briefly during recovery, then can usually resume normal activity and medications.

— ECG (electrocardiogram)

What it is: A quick, painless recording of your heart's electrical activity.

How to prepare

- No preparation needed
- It helps to avoid heavy lotions or creams on the chest that day

During (a few minutes): Small sticker electrodes are placed on your chest, arms, and legs while you lie still and breathe normally. **After:** You can resume activities immediately.

— Holter Monitor

What it is: A small, portable monitor that records your heart rhythm continuously for 24–48 hours (sometimes longer) while you go about your normal day. It can capture occasional rhythm changes that a short in-clinic ECG may miss. **This service is coming soon to HCPD.**

How it will work

- Shower before your appointment — the device can't get wet while you wear it
- Wear a loose two-piece outfit; small electrodes connect to the recorder
- Go about your usual activities and keep a short diary of any symptoms and the time they occur
- Return the monitor as instructed; your cardiologist reviews the full recording

Please confirm with our office any test-specific instructions — including which medications to hold before a stress test and our caffeine and fasting guidance — as these can vary by patient.

In an emergency — for severe chest pain, severe shortness of breath, fainting, or signs of a stroke (face drooping, arm weakness, slurred speech) — call **911** right away.

This handout gives general information and does **not** replace advice from your own physician. Your care is tailored to you; always follow the specific instructions you are given. General information adapted from public patient-education resources such as Heart & Stroke, the American Heart Association, and Cleveland Clinic.

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