

What can I expect after the test?

You will be monitored for a short time, while you are resting after the test, after which you may go home. The results of the test will be sent to your cardiologist who will discuss them with you.

For further information visit:

www.lhch.nhs.uk
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
www.bhf.org.uk
www.dipex.org

Or contact:

ECG Department - 0151 600 1714

The British Heart Foundation Information Line on 0845 070 8070.

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other format or language please contact us quoting the leaflet code and the language or format you require.

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W celu uzyskania niniejszej informacji w innym języku lub formacie (np. dużym drukiem), prosimy o kontakt z nami pod numerem 0151 600 1257 podając wymagany format lub język.
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Exercise Tolerance Test (ETT)



This leaflet has been written to provide information about a test to measure exercise tolerance and how your heart copes under stress. We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have about the test. It is not intended to replace talking with medical, nursing or technical staff.

What is an Exercise Tolerance Test (ETT)?

An Exercise Tolerance Test (ETT) records/monitors your heart rhythm and blood pressure (BP) while performing a controlled amount of exercise, usually by walking on a treadmill. The doctor or clinical physiologist overseeing the test will monitor how long you can exercise for, what symptoms you get, changes in your blood pressure and any changes that occur in your heart rhythms which is continuously recorded throughout the test.

Why do I need an ETT?

Often an ETT is requested to investigate the cause of chest pain or chest discomfort. There are many possible explanations for these symptoms and an ETT will help determine if the symptoms may be due to heart disease.

Other reasons for doing an ETT include the assessment of your ability to exercise, possibly after a heart attack or to investigate palpitations or abnormal heart rhythms or to assess the effects of your medication or treatment. If you are required to stop medication you will be informed on your appointment letter.

What should I wear for the test?

It is advisable for all patients to should wear flat comfortable shoes.

Ladies – please wear a two-piece outfit, for example trousers or skirt and a top.

How is it done?

Sticky pads are placed on the chest.

Male Patients - If you have a hairy chest the clinical physiologist will have to shave your chest in the areas where the sticky pads need to be attached so as they don't fall off during the test. They are placed on your chest and attached by wires to a special computer.

You will be asked to step on to a treadmill and start walking. The treadmill is controlled by the computer and will record your heartbeat as you walk. The treadmill is set to gradually increase in speed and gradients (slopes) every three minutes. Your response is monitored continuously throughout the test and it is important to inform the staff if you get any symptoms. Normally you will be asked to exercise for as long as you can. Sometimes however the test may be stopped before then by the physiologist doctor. Your heart rate, blood pressure and heart rhythm will continue to be monitored for a short while after the test.

Please wear comfortable full flat shoes.

Female Patients - If possible please avoid wearing full length slips or dresses - a two piece outfit is preferable for example skirt/trousers and a top.

How long does it take?

This varies on how long you are able to exercise for, any symptoms you get and changes to your blood pressure and heart rhythm.

What are the benefits of having the test?

The results of the test will help your doctor to determine if you may have possible evidence of heart disease and will help grade your exercise capacity. You may need to have further tests to confirm a diagnosis.

Are there any risks involved?

The test is performed under controlled conditions and is usually very safe. It is performed regularly in this hospital.

There is also a slight risk of arrhythmia (disturbance in rhythm), chest pain or shortness of breath following or during the test.

What alternatives do I have?

Other tests that provide similar information include Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram (DSE). This test involves the use of medication to increase the heart rate and is useful for patients who are unable to exercise due to physical limitations. Your doctor would be happy to discuss any alternative investigations if they are applicable to you.