Nuclear Exercise Stress Test

What is it?

A nuclear exercise stress test is a diagnostic test used to evaluate blood flow to the heart. During the test, a small amount of radioactive tracer is injected into a vein. A special camera, called a gamma camera, detects the radiation released by the tracer to produce computer images of the heart. Combined with exercise, the test can help determine if there is adequate blood flow to the heart during activity versus at rest.

What do I do?

- NO caffeine or decaffeinated products 24 hours prior to the test (This includes coffee, sodas, chocolate and tea.
- Don't eat or drink anything 8 hours before the test (see exception below).
- Take your medications the morning of your appointment with a sip of water.
- Bring a list of all your current medications, including the dose.
- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes and walking or exercise shoes.

What will happen?

We will obtain a brief history emphasizing current symptoms and pertinent family history. A small intravenous (IV) line is inserted into your arm and electrodes are attached to your chest. The first dose of the imaging agent is injected through the IV. Resting images are obtained with the nuclear camera moving around your chest.

- A stress test is performed on a treadmill with an EKG.
- A second dose of the imaging agent is injected into the IV.
- After the stress test, the patient is encouraged to eat and drink a snack.
- The second set of images is obtained at least 20 minutes after the treadmill test.

How long does it take?

The test takes about three (3) hours.

EXCEPTION:

If the patient is scheduled for afternoon testing, the patient can eat a small piece of toast, a small banana or small bowl of oatmeal with water or juice before 8:00 AM. Nothing may be eaten after 8:00 AM. If you are diabetic, you may request to be scheduled in the afternoon, so that you can eat in the morning.