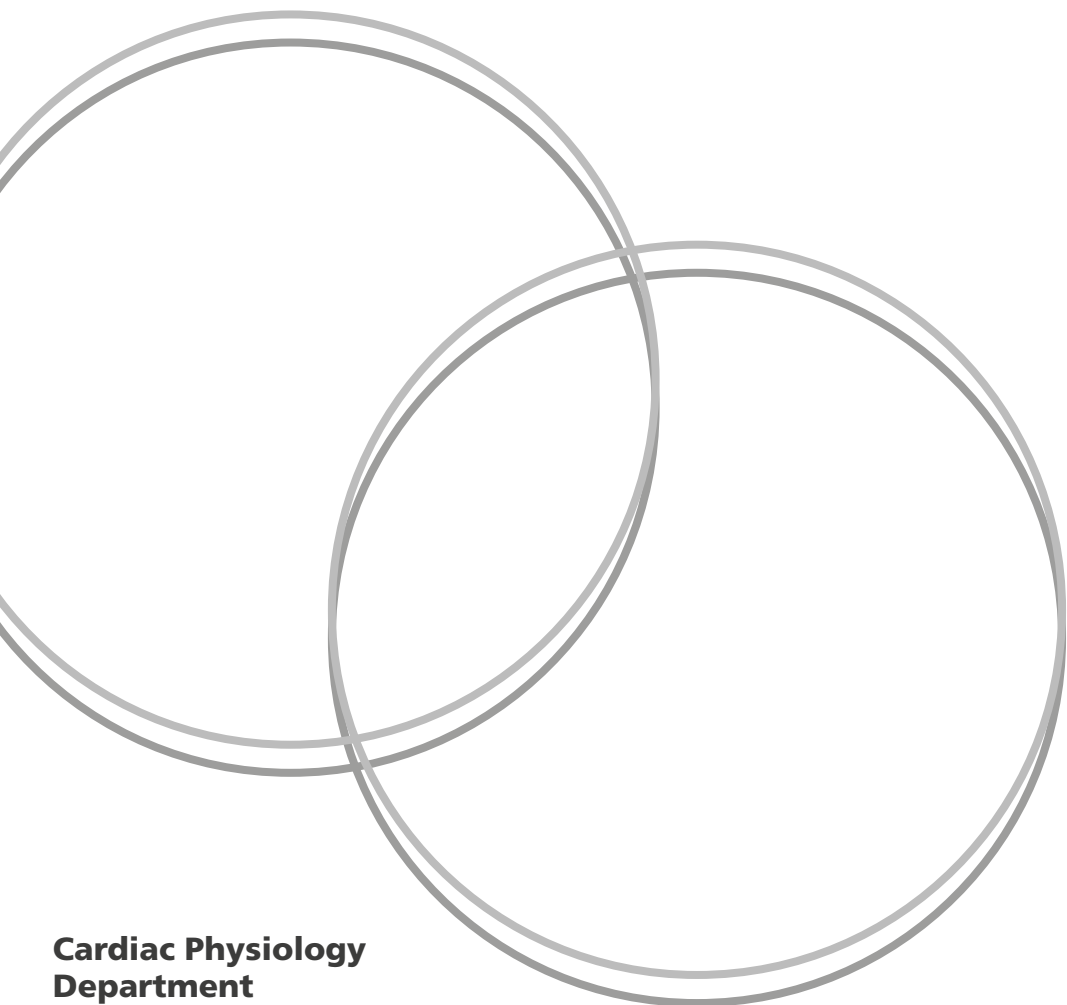




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Exercise tolerance test

Information for patients



**Cardiac Physiology  
Department**

## **What is an exercise tolerance test?**

An exercise tolerance test, also known as a stress test or ETT, involves walking on a treadmill or using a static bike called an ergometer, to assess your heart rate and rhythm and blood pressure with exercise. The test is performed by a cardiac Physiologist, Cardiac Scientist, or a Cardiac Nurse. The test will be stopped if you have any discomfort, if the team feel that you have done enough exercise, or if you feel you are unable to continue for any reason. The test usually lasts approximately 40 minutes in total (Including set up and recovery).

## **What is the reason for the test?**

The test shows how the heart functions under stress. It can help detect heart problems such as angina. When symptoms such as dizziness or palpitations occur with exercise, it can identify abnormal heart rhythms. It can also show how effective treatments are as well as help us to see how your heart and circulation respond to exercise.

## **Advice about your appointment:**

- **DO NOT** use any moisturisers on the day of your appointment as they can affect the adhesives of the electrodes (Stickers).
- **DO** bring an up-to-date list of your medications.
- **DO** let us know if you have any illnesses such as coughs, colds or joint pain that may affect your ability to perform a test or attend the appointment.
- **DO** wear comfortable shoes suitable for exercise e.g. trainers. Please do not wear high heels, flip flops or slip-on shoes.
- **DO NOT** smoke, drink alcohol or heavily caffeinated drinks, eat heavy meals or perform vigorous exercise for at least an hour prior to attending your appointment.

If you prefer a specific gender of staff to be present during the test, please contact the department with as much notice as possible and we will aim to accommodate your request wherever we can.

Friends and family will not be able to accompany you during the test unless you require additional support, but they may wait outside the room. Children/patients with additional needs may be accompanied by one parent/guardian.

## **What happens during the test**

You will usually need to remove all your clothing from the waist up to attach ECG electrodes (Stickers) to your chest to monitor your heart. If your top is loose enough, you may put this back on during the test. A gown will be provided if required. A blood pressure cuff will be attached to your arm. You will walk on a treadmill that is set to follow a protocol that involves walking with a very gradual increase in speed and incline (slope) or you will cycle at a pre-set work level. The team performing the test will be available to advise you on what to do and to explain what will happen during the appointment.

The exercise test itself includes a period of observation after exercise, during which your heart rate and blood pressure will continue to be monitored. The test ends after that period of rest.

When you arrive for your appointment, our staff will assess your ability to perform the test. If an alternative test is deemed more suitable, the team will arrange this. Please note that this will need to be booked for an alternative date.

It is important to let the department know prior to your appointment if you are unable to perform the test on the appointment date given. Our telephone numbers are below, and staff can discuss any concerns you may have.

## **Are there any risks?**

There is a very small risk of arrhythmia (a problem with the rate or rhythm of the heartbeat) or cardiac arrest. Your heart will be monitored at all times and staff are trained in cardiac resuscitation and emergency procedures in the unlikely event of any problem. There is an emergency stop button on the treadmill which the team can press at any time if necessary.

## **What happens afterwards?**

The test will be reviewed by your clinician and the results will be discussed with you during your next outpatient appointment or you may receive a letter with the results through the post.

## **Questions or concerns**

If you have any questions or concerns before your procedure, please telephone:

### **John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford**

Telephone: 01865 220 258

### **Horton General Hospital, Banbury**

Telephone: 01295 229 099

Email: [ecg@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:ecg@ouh.nhs.uk)

# Notes

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## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
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