

# Preparing for a Nuclear Stress Test

Care Management Services



Please discuss any questions you may have regarding this test with your doctor or call 515-386-0469, Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

This pamphlet is not intended to replace an informed conversation with your doctor but to provide you with a general understanding of the procedure.

If you cannot keep your appointment, please call the Cardiac Management department at the number provided above.

Thank you.  
**Cardiac Management**



### **Hours:**

Monday - Friday  
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**(515) 386-0469**  
**Fax: 515-386-2017**

### **Greene County Medical Center**

1000 West Lincolnway  
Jefferson, IA 50129

[gcmhealth.com](http://gcmhealth.com)

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## What is a Nuclear Stress (Exercise) Test?

Your doctor has ordered a nuclear stress test to be performed. This test will take about four hours. A nuclear stress (exercise) test will provide information about your heart, allowing your doctor to determine the following:

- Blood supply to your heart and if there are any changes from rest to exercise
- If you have coronary artery disease (CAD)
- The effects of medications on the heart
- Whether more tests are necessary

### How does the test work?

1. A small amount of special nuclear imaging material will be injected into a small, flexible catheter that has been placed in an arm vein. The material enables a better picture of blood flow through the arteries to your heart. This small amount will circulate through your system for a specified amount of time. Afterwards, a resting set of pictures will be taken.
2. You will be asked to lie flat on your back on a special table with your left arm above your head. This allows the camera to move closely around your chest and obtain the best pictures possible. This set of pictures will take approximately 30 minutes once you are situated. It is very important to lie as still as possible while the pictures are being taken to ensure the best possible pictures are obtained. If you feel you are unable to tolerate this position due to arthritis or another medical condition, please inform your doctor before the test.
3. After the first set of pictures, you will be prepped for the exercise portion of the test. Your chest will be cleaned and shaved, if necessary. Electrocardiograph (ECG) leads will be attached to your chest to monitor your heart rate while you are exercising.

4. You will begin walking on a treadmill. The speed and incline of the treadmill will increase at specific time intervals. Your blood pressure and heart rate will be monitored throughout the exercise portion of the test.
5. It is very important to tell your technician immediately if at any time you begin to experience shortness of breath, chest pain, lightheadedness, leg pain or cramping.
6. Once your heart rate has reached a certain level, the nuclear medicine technologist will inject the second dose of special nuclear imaging material and you will continue to walk for one minute.
7. Once the exercise portion of the test is complete, the dose will be allowed to circulate for a specified period of time. During that time, you may have something to eat and drink. Please do not eat or drink anything with caffeine.
8. You will be positioned under the camera for the second set of pictures. This set of pictures will take approximately 30 minutes. Once again, it is very important to lie as still as possible during these pictures to ensure the best images are obtained.

### What if I can't walk on the treadmill?

Please inform your doctor if you are unable to walk on a treadmill. A drug-administered stress test can be used if you cannot exercise on a treadmill due to physical limitations. Various medications can be administered to simulate exercise so that the physician can see how your heart will respond.



### How do I prepare for the test?

1. For 24 hours before your test, please do not eat or drink any of the following foods or beverages:
  - Coffee or tea that is brewed, instant, iced or decaffeinated
  - Colas or soft drinks containing caffeine, including those labeled as “caffeine-free”
  - Chocolates, including candies, frosting, cookies, pies, cocoa and chocolate milk
  - Aspirin products that contain caffeine
2. Do not eat or drink anything for four hours before your test. This prevents the possibility of becoming nauseous during the exercise portion of the test. If you have diabetes or are unable to fast for other medical reasons, please consult your doctor before the test for instructions.
3. Your doctor may instruct you to temporarily discontinue taking any heart medication that could alter the results of the test.
4. Wear comfortable clothes and walking shoes the day of the exam.
5. If you are pregnant or nursing, or think you may be pregnant, please discuss this with your doctor. This test may not be appropriate at this time and your doctor may want to schedule you for a different type of test.

### What happens after the test?

1. Your doctor will receive results of your exam the next working day. Your doctor will contact you to discuss the results of the exam.
2. The flexible catheter will be removed. The small amount of material injected will be released through the body waste within the next 24 hours. To speed up the process, you are encouraged to drink plenty of liquids.
3. The radiation exposure is minimal with a test. It is about the same as what you get from a chest x-ray. There have been years of research and development in the field of nuclear medicine. There is no danger caused by the radiation exposure of this test.