Pulmonary Exercise Stress Test

This test tells how much air moves in and out of your lungs when you exercise. During the test, you may be asked to walk on a treadmill or ride on a stationary bike. The test may locate where your breathing problems begin. They may begin in the lungs, the heart, or both. Your test results can also show a safe activity level for you.

Risks and Complications

Like many tests, this test involves some risks. They may include:

- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Rise or fall in blood pressure
- Fainting, dizziness, or fatigue
- Abnormal heartbeat or heart rate
- Heart attack or stroke (rare)

Before the Test

Allow at least 30 minutes to check in. Prepare for the test as directed. You may be told to do any of the following:

- Stop eating and drinking fluids for 3 hours before the test. If you have diabetes, ask what you may eat or drink before the test.
- Stop smoking for at least 8–12 hours before the test.
- Stop taking certain medications 4–12 hours before the test.
- Wear walking shoes, such as sneakers.

During the Test

Small pads (electrodes) placed on your upper body will monitor your heart rate. A device clipped to your finger will measure the amount of oxygen in your blood. You will also wear nose clips and breathe through a mouthpiece.

- Before you start to exercise, a spirometry test may be done. This will measure the amount of air you inhale while at rest.
- While you exercise, your heart rate, breathing, and blood pressure are monitored. Exercise as long as you can. When the test is over, keep the mouthpiece in place until you are told to remove it.
- Throughout the process, blood samples may be taken. This is done to measure oxygen and waste products in the blood during exercise.

After the Test

You can return to your normal diet, activity, and medications. If you were told to skip medications before the test, ask if you should take them now. Your doctor will discuss the test results with you at your next visit.

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