



# Exercise treadmill test (ETT)

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**Your clinician recommends that you do an exercise treadmill test. This leaflet explains what to expect during the test and why it is being carried out.**

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## What is an exercise treadmill test?

An exercise treadmill test, also known as a stress test, is a safe, supervised way to check how your heart works during exercise.

The aim is to reproduce your usual symptoms so they can be evaluated. While you walk on a treadmill, your heart rhythm, heart rate, and blood pressure are monitored. The speed and incline of the treadmill gradually increase to gently make your heart work harder.

## Why do I need an exercise treadmill test?

Your doctor has requested this non-invasive test to gather more information about how your heart is functioning. It can help show whether your symptoms or medical history are linked to a heart condition, and it provides useful insight into how your heart responds to exercise and treatment.

The results can help check:

- symptoms such as chest pain, breathlessness, or palpitations
- fainting or loss of consciousness when you exercise
- signs of coronary artery disease
- valve disease
- your fitness level or how well you are responding to treatment
- your heart after a previous procedure or heart condition
- whether you are getting the best out of your pacemaker or ICD

## Preparing for your test

- Wear comfortable clothing, ideally a top and bottoms/trousers (dresses are not suitable).
- Wear supportive footwear suitable for doing exercise, such as trainers or sneakers (avoid heels and sandals).
- If you are pregnant or suspect you may be, please contact the department as it may not be advisable to proceed with the test.
- Continue to take all your usual medications unless otherwise advised. Please bring a list of your current medications with you to your appointment.
- If you have been prescribed Glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray, please bring it with you.
- Do not have a heavy meal at least 2 hours prior to the test. Avoid caffeinated drinks as they may affect the result. Other fluids can be consumed up to the start of your test, and we do recommend you come to the test well-hydrated.

## Getting to us

Exercise treadmill tests are carried out at the Royal Berkshire Hospital:

**Royal Berkshire Hospital:** Cardiology Department, Battle Block, Level 1, Craven Road, Reading RG1 5AN

## When should I arrive?

Arrive at the department about 10 minutes before your appointment. **Allow extra time for parking**, as late arrival may result in your appointment being rescheduled.

Upon arrival, please check in at reception or inform the cardiac practitioner.

## On the day of your appointment

The test is supervised by healthcare professionals and typically lasts 30 minutes, including preparation and recovery.

You will be taken into the treadmill room, where a physiologist will discuss your medical history and explain the test to you.

The exercise treadmill test aims to safely reproduce your symptoms in a monitored setting, helping with diagnosis and reassurance. Usually, 2 physiologists will be with you throughout the test.

You will be asked to undress to the waist and given a gown to wear (female patients will be asked to remove their bra during the test). Some male patients may need a small area of chest hair shaved so the electrodes can stick to the skin for adequate testing.

1. **Setup:** ECG electrodes are placed on the chest to record the heart's electrical activity, and a blood pressure cuff monitors blood pressure throughout the test.
2. **Warm-up:** You start walking on the treadmill at a slow pace – the physiologist will explain the correct walking technique.
3. **Exercise phase:** Depending on the protocol, the treadmill speed and incline increase every 3 minutes to gradually 'stress' the heart. You continue exercising until you reach your typical symptoms (chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, syncope), or reach your maximum capacity.
4. **Monitoring:** Heart rate, rhythm, blood pressure, symptoms are continuously monitored through the test.
5. **Recovery:** After stopping, you are monitored as your heart rate and blood pressure return to normal, this can take between 5-10 minutes.

## Important information

- This test is only suitable for patients who are mobile and able to walk safely on a treadmill.
- Avoid heavy meals and caffeinated drinks at least 2 hours prior to the test.

## Results

The results will be sent to your referring clinician, who will contact you if any further action is required. For any queries regarding your results, please contact your referring clinician directly.

### **Additional requirements**

For patients with additional requirements, please contact the department in advance so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Children and supervision** — Children must not be left unattended in the waiting area. Staff are unable to supervise children, so please ensure appropriate childcare arrangements are in place. Failure to do so may result in your appointment being rescheduled.

### **Useful contacts**

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 11)      0118 322 6676 or email [rbb-tr.cat11@nhs.net](mailto:rbb-tr.cat11@nhs.net)  
Cardiology Reception Enquiries      0118 322 6515  
British Heart Foundation:      [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

This leaflet is printed privately for the Cardiac Fund. It was set up in 1976 for the purpose of providing cardiac services that would otherwise not be available through National Health resources. Our Cardiac Laboratory was largely equipped through the fund and many other areas in the Department have also benefited from equipment and staff training.



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Royal Berks Charity  
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Reading RG1 5AN Telephone 0118 322 8860 [www.royalberkscharity.co.uk](http://www.royalberkscharity.co.uk)

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