

Guide to Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram

A dobutamine stress echocardiogram combines an ultrasound study of the heart with an infusion of an adrenaline-like substance (dobutamine) that stresses the heart in a way that is similar to the effect of exercise. This test, which is used for patients who are unable to walk on a treadmill, provides information on how the heart functions when it is made to work harder, and is especially helpful in diagnosing coronary heart disease. Ultrasound (high frequency sound waves not heard by the human ear) is used to make pictures of your heart before and after dobutamine treatment.

Pre-Registration and Testing Location

Our office will call you 2 days before the date your test is scheduled to confirm your appointment. At this time we can also answer questions you may have. Please have your referring physician complete the **Echo Order Form**. Plan to arrive 20 minutes before the scheduled time of your test. Bring your insurance cards with you. Go directly to the test location.

Echocardiograms are performed at:

NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center Echocardiography Laboratory

Starr Pavilion

520 East 70th Street, off York Avenue

New York, NY 10021

Take the Starr elevators to the 4th floor, make a right and follow the signs to room K-425

Before the Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram

Do not apply lotions, oils or powders to the chest area. Your referring doctor may want you to stop taking some of your medicines before the exam. Ask your referring doctor about this as this may affect the results of the test. If you take insulin, check to find out what amount of insulin to take on the testing day.

On the day of the exam do not eat or drink anything for 4 hours before the test. Do not take alcohol for 24 hours before the test. Please refrain from smoking for at least 4 hours before your test.

During the Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram

The test is usually performed in a darkened room. A hollow tube called an intravenous line will be inserted into a vein. You will be asked to lie on your back, your left side, and/or sit up. A lubricating gel will be applied to the skin over the heart area. A small smooth instrument (called a transducer) is moved and/or tilted gently across our chest, in various positions during the exam. The transducer picks up the sound waves from your heart and a live image of your heart will be displayed on a TV monitor.

At times during the exam you may hear a "swishing" sound (called Doppler) coming from the machine. This is the blood flow as it moves through the heart valves.

After initial pictures of your heart are recorded, dobutamine will be infused at a low dose to increase your heart rate and forcefulness of the heart beat for several minutes before ultrasound recordings are made again. This may be repeated several times to see if the heart develops evidence of inadequate blood supply at higher levels of stress. You may experience rapid heartbeat or a sense of chest tightness during the procedure. The test time is approximately 45-60 minutes.

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Cardiac Echocardiography Laboratory
Phone: 212-746-4670