

Preparation for stress cardiac MRI

Your doctor has ordered a stress cardiac MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) test at Yale New Haven Hospital. This test looks at blood flow in the heart muscle to evaluate for possible blockages in the heart arteries, along with looking at structure and function of the heart.

Before the test

- Notify your doctor if you have any of the following: pacemaker, implanted defibrillator, aneurysm clip, metallic implant, or metal fragments in the eyes or anywhere in your body.
- Let your doctor or nurse know if you are claustrophobic or have pain when lying flat for more than 30 minutes. Claustrophobia or inability to be still for more than 30 minutes will interfere with the exam.
- We cannot perform the test if you are pregnant or breast feeding. Please notify your doctor if so.

How should you prepare?

- For 24 hours before the test, DO NOT CONSUME CAFFEINE from any source, including from coffee, tea, soda, or chocolate. This also includes decaffeinated beverages.
- If your exam is scheduled before or at 12 noon, do not eat anything after midnight the night before your exam.
- If your exam is scheduled after 12 noon, you may eat a very light breakfast (such as a piece of toast and/or fruit) by 6am that morning.

What to expect the day of the exam

- Before entering the MRI room, the nurse will perform an EKG. The nurse will also place an IV line (a needle with tubing attached in a vein) into each arm. One arm will be used to give the stress medicine to enlarge the arteries of your heart. The other arm will be used to give a contrast agent, called gadolinium, which helps to visualize the blood flow in the heart muscles.
- Once in the MRI room, you will lie flat on your back. The MRI technologist will place a MRI detector pad on your chest.
- The study takes about 1 hour. During the exam, you will need to lie still. You will also be asked to perform brief breath holds throughout the exam. Your cooperation with lying still and breath holding is necessary to obtain good images.
- The MRI machine makes loud knocking sounds as it takes the images. You will be given earplugs for comfort.
- There is a two-way intercom for you to speak with the technologist, if needed, throughout the exam.

After the test

- After the test, you will have another EKG and be monitored for 30 minutes.
- After the test is complete, you can eat and resume your normal activity.