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## NUCLEAR MEDICINE IMAGING

# A Patient's Guide to Nuclear Cardiology Imaging

*Provider of  
Nuclear Medicine Services To:*

Your appointment is scheduled as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patient's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appointment Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Appointment Time                      a.m. / p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hospital/Facility

*Please arrive at the hospital/facility 15 minutes before your appointment for registration unless otherwise instructed.*



## WHAT IS A NUCLEAR CARDIOLOGY SCAN?

This is a test used to determine if your heart muscle is getting the blood supply it needs. The test also helps find out how well your heart is working. A small amount of a radioactive material will be injected into your blood. A special camera is then used to take pictures of your heart.

Although it is a radioactive material, it is safely cleared from your body by natural processes. You will be exposed to the same amount of radiation as in a simple X-ray or CAT (CT) scan. Millions of nuclear medicine procedures are safely performed each year.

## HOW DOES THE TEST WORK?

Several small pads called electrodes will be placed on your chest. These pads will be connected to an electrocardiograph (ECG) monitor so that your heart rhythm can be watched closely throughout the stress portion of the test. An intravenous (IV) line will be placed in your arm. This will be used to inject the radioactive material into your bloodstream. The IV line will be removed soon after the test is complete.

The test usually consists of taking pictures of your heart in two phases: one set of pictures is of your heart at rest and one set is of your heart after stress.

The radioactive material will be injected while you rest and the special camera will then take pictures of your heart. Then, the radioactive material will be injected during stress, which is usually while you are on a treadmill and then pictures will again be taken of your heart. If you are unable to exercise on a treadmill, you may be given a drug, by injection, intended to have a similar effect on the heart to that of exercise.

These two sets of pictures allow the doctor to compare the amount of blood flowing through your heart muscle during rest and under stress.

The day of the test, you will be informed if the exercise or rest portion of the study will be done first. The entire exam will take 4-5 hours to complete.



## WHY DO I NEED THIS TEST?

This test will give your doctor information about how your heart is functioning. Your heart receives life-giving blood from vessels called coronary arteries. If these arteries become blocked or narrowed by the buildup of fatty material (lipids), your heart may not receive the blood it needs to function properly. This narrowing of the coronary arteries is called coronary atherosclerosis or, more commonly, coronary artery disease (CAD).

## WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE THE TEST?

Talk to your doctor first to see if there is anything you must do to prepare for your test, or if there are any restrictions in diet, medication, or activities prior to your test.

You may be asked not to eat or drink several hours prior to the test. This will prevent the possibility of an upset stomach, or nausea, which may accompany vigorous exercising after eating.

Your doctor may ask you to stop taking certain heart medications prior to the exam. Some heart medications may interfere with the accuracy and effectiveness of the exam.

If you will be exercising for the stress exam, you should wear comfortable footwear for brisk exercise on a treadmill (a moving platform you walk on). You will work hard during the test and comfortable clothing will make it easier for you. Slacks or shorts are preferred for the exercise portion of the exam. A hospital gown may be provided on the day of the test.

Dress comfortably with loose clothing. You may bring a music CD to listen to or VHS or DVD to watch during your procedure.