

Having an exercise test

What is it?

A cardiorespiratory fitness test is a complete assessment of how efficient your body is at using oxygen to produce energy. It is also how efficient your heart and lungs are when you exercise.

It also measures your level of aerobic fitness.

What does the test involve?

The test involves your cycling on a static bicycle or a treadmill and as you do this we monitor how your heart rate and breathing change in response to the exercise.

The test may be submaximal, where it is taken to a certain level of your exertion and then stopped, or maximal, where you are pushed to exhaustion. A maximal test is usually reserved for fit people and even in this group is not always necessary.

Bring loose comfortable clothing such as shorts and a sweat top, and comfortable shoes – preferably running shoes.

You should not eat a big meal, caffeine, alcohol nor smoke less than 3 hours before the test.

If you are diabetic on insulin please make this clear to the testing team on your arrival.

If you fatigue easily with exercise you may wish to ask a friend or relative to bring you to and from the clinic.

Safety Issues

We aim to make this test as safe as possible for you and there are some criteria which may prevent you from undertaking the exercise test during your visit. These are designed to protect your health.

You may be unable to undertake the exercise test if any of the following criteria apply:

- Significant current symptoms like chest pain, dizziness, fainting etc
- Raised resting blood pressure above 160/100 mmHg
- Resting heart rate greater than 100 beats per minute or less than 40 beats per minute
- Recent fever or infection
- Any current or previous history of cardiac problems like heart attack, angina, heart surgery, heart rhythm abnormality, cardiomyopathy, heart valve problems, congenital heart disease, heart failure, heart pacemaker and heart transplant
- Any current or previous lung problems like chronic airways disease, emphysema, cystic fibrosis, pneumothorax, pulmonary embolism, lung cancer, TB or active chest infection
- Any current or previous neurological problems like transient ischaemic attacks (TIA), brain haemorrhage, stroke, MS or brain tumour
- Other serious medical conditions eg. Uncontrolled diabetes and asthma
- Pregnancy or 4 weeks after pregnancy
- Significant abnormality on the resting ECG trace

- Problems with muscles, bones and joints and recent injuries

- The following may interfere with the heart rhythm and if you are taking any of these you will not be able to take the bicycle exercise test:
 - Cold and cough remedy drugs containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine
 - Drugs that control the heart rhythm, including
 - digoxin
 - Tricyclic antidepressants for depression
 - Beta-blocker drugs because they alter the heart rate response and invalidate the fitness test

It is very important for you to tell us during your assessment about any recent symptoms and give us full details of your medical history so we can assess your health risks for exercise.