



Cardiac PET Stress Test

How to prepare and what to expect

What is a Cardiac PET Stress Test?

A cardiac PET (positron emission tomography) scan creates images of your heart using a scanning machine and an injection of radioactive tracers. The test's radioactive tracers release energy. Depending on the specific type of tracer and the conditions under which a healthcare provider injects it, the pattern with which the tracer lights up your heart can give providers information about how healthy your heart is.

A PET scan of your heart is a noninvasive, accurate test that creates images of your heart from every angle. By looking at what your body's cells are doing, a cardiac PET scan can provide information other imaging tests can't. And it can find problems earlier than other tests can.

A combined PET/CT (computed tomography) scanner can take both types of images one after the other with the same machine.

What happens during a Cardiac PET Stress Test?

After replacing your shirt with a hospital gown and having a blood pressure check, you'll:

1. Have an electrocardiogram (EKG) before and during the test to keep track of your heart's electrical activity. Painless, sticky patches on your body collect this information.
2. Get an IV in your arm or hand so you can receive medication and a radioactive tracer during the test.
3. Lie still on the exam table with a camera above you in the middle of a large, donut-shaped machine.
4. Receive a small amount of radioactive tracer through your IV so your provider can scan to check your blood flow while you rest.
5. Receive medication through your IV to make your heart react as if you were exercising. You may feel warm or cold and may have a mild headache.
6. Get another small amount of tracer so your provider can scan to check your blood flow while you're "active." Your provider will compare the two scans (resting and active).