

## Department of Respiratory Physiology

# Exercise Tests

### What are exercise tests?

Your doctor/consultant has asked that you have these tests carried out. They are designed to show how well your lungs and heart are working. There are **four different types of exercise tests** and the one you will perform will depend on your diagnosis and/or symptoms.

The four different tests are listed below.

#### 1. Cardio Pulmonary Exercise Test (CPET)

This is performed on a static bicycle or treadmill. Your heart and lungs are monitored whilst you exercise to a gradually increasing workload. Please allow an hour for the appointment; however you will not be exercising for the full hour.

### What happens during the test?

You will perform a basic breathing test to begin with; then an ECG monitor and blood pressure check will be done prior to performing the exercise test. Overall, the exercise portion will last approximately 20 minutes, with different levels of exercise, and you will be advised about this throughout the test.

#### 2. Six Minute Walk Test (6MWT)

This measures how far you can walk within a six minute time period. Whilst walking, measurements of heart rate and oxygen levels will also be made using a finger or ear probe.



## Patient Information

### **What happens during the test?**

You will walk around a 22 meter course in the corridor of the department for a period of six minutes, whilst the physiologist monitors your heart rate and oxygen levels. You can stop at any point during the test and take as many rests as you need. The test time is six minutes but you should allow time after for recovery.

### **3. Incremental Shuttle Walk Test (ISWT)**

This test is similar to the six minute walk test but you will be required to walk slightly faster with each lap. The test requires you to walk very slowly at the beginning and increase your walking speed every minute until you are no longer able to keep up with the test speed or your symptoms; for example, breathlessness prevents you walking any faster.

### **What happens during the test?**

You will walk around a 10 metre course to a series of beeps. Your heart rate and oxygen levels will be monitored by the physiologist throughout the test. Every minute the test speed will increase and you will be advised about this prior to starting the test. The overall test can take up to 15 minutes and you should allow time for recovery.

### **4. Exercise Induced Bronchoconstriction (EIB)**

Lung function tests are carried out before and after exercising on a treadmill to assess any change in the airways. Please allow an hour for this appointment; however you will not be exercising for the full hour.

### **What happens during the test?**

Baseline breathing tests will be performed prior to commencing exercise. You will walk/run on the treadmill for 8 minutes. The physiologist will record heart rate, oxygen levels and other measurements during this time. After exercise is complete, you will have to complete the breathing test at different time intervals after the exercise test, for example, every 2 minutes, which will be dependent on the results from the breathing test each time it is performed.

### **Why perform exercise tests?**

- Sometimes breathing difficulties do not appear at rest;
- They can determine the cause of a problem if other tests are inconclusive;
- They can monitor the effectiveness of treatment;
- To evaluate a person's fitness before surgery.

### **What must I do before the tests?**

On the day or a few days before the appointment you will need to:

- **Carefully read the appointment letter** to find out whether you are to take medication as normal or if you should avoid taking any breathing tablets or inhalers;
- Wear comfortable clothing and **flat shoes**;
- **Eat a light meal at least two hours** before your appointment;
- Avoid smoking and alcohol;
- No previous exercise should be undertaken on the day;
- **Remove nail varnish/false nails**;
- Bring with you a **list of any medications** you are taking.

### **Will I feel any pain or discomfort during or after the tests?**

During the tests you may experience shortness of breath and/or fatigue but you will be given the chance to rest when the tests are over. After the CPET test, we usually advise people to relax for the rest of the day and resume normal activities the next day.

### **What happens after the tests have been completed?**

Your test results will not be discussed with you at your appointment but will be sent to the consultant who asked for the test. They will then discuss the results with you at your next appointment, as they may have asked for other investigations.

## Patient Information

### Further Information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact the Respiratory Physiology Department on 024 7696 6734.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6734 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

#### Document History

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