

Cardiopulmonary Exercise Testing

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Your doctor or surgeon has requested that you attend the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford) for a cardiopulmonary exercise test (CPET). This test is carried out either to assess a pre-existing medical condition, investigate why you have certain symptoms or as part of your assessment before consideration for a surgical procedure.

The exercise test will be analysed by a consultant anaesthetist after your appointment and a report sent to your doctor or surgeon. The consultant anaesthetist may discuss the results with you immediately. These discussions can help inform you and your surgeon in the planning of your ongoing treatment and medical care.

Some patients may be reassured by the test. A small minority may wish to reconsider their decision to have surgery or choose to delay surgery to improve their fitness.

What is the exercise test?

The test looks at the functioning of your heart and lungs and how they work together. It is also used to help us understand your level of physiological fitness. The CPET can help us to determine if you have any medical problems that may need further specialist investigation or which could be improved before a procedure, to reduce the risks of complications that may affect your recovery from an operation.

It has been shown to help predict your individual survival, both with and without an operation.

How do we do this?

Your appointment and test will last between 40 minutes to 1 hour. You may bring a friend or relative if you wish, although they will not be allowed in the room when you are doing the test. Your test will be performed by a member of the anaesthetic CPET team. We will ask you about any current medical conditions, medications and any physical limitations that you may have to your daily routine. We will measure your height and weight and you will be asked to perform some simple breathing tests using a special mouthpiece (spirometry). We will attach an electrical tracing of the heart (ECG) and you will then be requested to pedal on an exercise bike for approximately 8-10 minutes whilst wearing a mask measuring the air you breathe. You will be monitored throughout the exercise.

It is helpful if you are able to bring a list of any medications that you are currently taking.

Are there any special precautions I need to take?

No, you may eat and drink but avoid a heavy meal beforehand.

Please take medications as normal.

Please wear comfortable, loose clothing with shoes or trainers. Trousers are preferable to skirts and avoid wearing heels.

Are there any risks?

Performing your cardiopulmonary exercise test will involve a moderate degree of exertion for approximately 5 minutes. You will be closely monitored throughout, making the test very safe.

If you develop any clinical symptoms during the test, the trained staff in attendance will treat accordingly and the test will be stopped.

Where to go for the service and how to find it

Preparation for Surgery,
Ground Floor,
Area Q,
Wonford.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by Royal Devon staff undertaking procedures at the Royal Devon hospitals.

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