

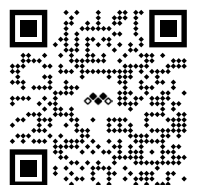
# CARDIOVASCULAR TESTING PROVIDER GUIDE



**MONUMENT  
HEALTH**

HEART AND VASCULAR INSTITUTE

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A LETTER FROM

**RAJESH PRADHAN, M.D., FACC**  
**MEDICAL DIRECTOR, CARDIOVASCULAR IMAGING**  
**MONUMENT HEALTH HEART AND VASCULAR INSTITUTE**

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Dear Colleague,

Monument Health Heart and Vascular Institute is happy to provide this Outpatient Cardiovascular Testing Guide to you as a reference. This guide can help you choose the correct test for your patient based on their symptoms, clinical status and EKG. As health care providers, we are all under intense scrutiny from Medicare and other payers to improve our utilization of imaging tests based on appropriate use criteria. The guide provides information regarding common appropriate use criteria for stress tests. Also included with this guide are Diagnostic Testing Order forms that you may use when ordering noninvasive tests from Monument Health Heart and Vascular Institute. Complete and accurate order forms help us schedule a complete testing for your patient in a timely manner. Please note that this guide does not cover stress testing for hospitalized patients with acute chest pain syndromes.

We are dedicated to the process of continuous quality improvement. We are proud of the fact that the Heart and Vascular Institute includes the only laboratory in the region that is accredited by the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission for nuclear cardiology, echocardiography and vascular (carotid) studies.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information. We hope you will find this guide useful in your practice.

Sincerely yours,

**RAJESH PRADHAN, M.D., FACC**

Monument Health Heart and Vascular Institute, Medical Director CVI

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## OUR MISSION

Providers at Monument Health Heart and Vascular Institute pledge their talents and resources toward providing the highest level of compassionate, comprehensive and innovating cardiovascular care to all who seek it.

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# CHOOSING THE RIGHT STRESS TEST FOR YOUR PATIENT

## Ask Yourself These 5 Questions:

- 1 | Can the patient exercise on the treadmill?
  - a. Can they walk briskly uphill for 5 minutes without stopping?
- 2 | Is the resting EKG normal or abnormal?  
(Q waves, bundle branch block, paced rhythm, ST-T changes, WPW, etc.)?
- 3 | Why are you ordering the test?
- 4 | Is the patient obese (BMI >35)?
- 5 | Has the patient had prior bypass surgery or coronary intervention?

## Choose from the types of stress tests available through Monument Health Heart and Vascular Institute.

### Standard Exercise Treadmill Test Option

**Exercise Only Stress Test (1 hour):** Treadmill exercise only, without cardiac imaging, is also known as a standard Exercise Treadmill Test (ETT). For patients with low to intermediate risk for cardiovascular disease, with symptoms of chest, arm or back discomfort, shortness of breath with exertion, possible arrhythmias; useful for monitoring heart rate response to exercise, assessing function capacity.

**NOT RECOMMENDED** if patient already has EKG abnormalities such as LVH and ST depression, LBBB, patient on Digoxin, WPW pattern ECG, paced ventricular rhythm, or resting ST depression of any cause, ischemic evaluation for patient with history of CAD, or if patient is unable to tolerate an adequate amount of exercise on treadmill. Women may have false positive EKG results and it is sometimes preferred to include some type of imaging along with the exercise testing.

**COST: \$**

### Echo Stress Testing Options

**Stress Echocardiogram (1 hour):** Treadmill exercise with echocardiographic imaging before and immediately after exercise.

A stress echocardiogram is recommended over an ETT when gathering the following information on a patient with LVH or ST-T changes (i.e., ST depression) on resting EKG: ischemic evaluation, information about heart structure (i.e., valves or wall motion, chamber size, etc.) or pulmonary hypertension evaluation.

**NOT RECOMMENDED** if patient is unable to walk on a treadmill for an adequate amount of time, has LBBB on EKG or has paced ventricular rhythm (septal wall motion defect after exercise may affect accurate detection of ischemia). Echo imaging may be difficult if patient has rapid atrial fibrillation. Not suitable in very obese patients, those with significant COPD or people with resting wall motion abnormalities on echo (prior infarction/scar).

**COST: \$\$**

**Dobutamine Stress Echocardiogram (1 1/2 hours):** Pharmacological stress test utilizing Dobutamine infusion for vasodilation and inotropic action with echocardiographic imaging before, during and after infusion. The test is used for the same reasons as a Stress Echocardiogram, but specifically for patients unable to perform a treadmill exercise. Avoid ordering in morbidly obese patients, those with left bundle branch block (LBBB), paced rhythm or atrial fibrillation.

**COST: \$\$**

## Nuclear Stress Testing Options

**NM Exercise Myocardial Perfusion Imaging (3 hours):** Treadmill exercise test using Bruce protocol along with nuclear perfusion imaging. A nuclear isotope called Myoview (Technetium 99m Tetrofosmin) is given before and at peak exercise and is followed by imaging. The test should be used to evaluate patients with known or suspected CAD, new EKG changes such as ST T-wave changes (i.e., ST depression, T wave inversions).

**NOT RECOMMENDED** if patient is unable to walk on a treadmill, has LBBB on EKG, paced heart rhythm or rapid atrial fibrillation.

**COST: \$\$\$**

**NM Lexiscan Myocardial Perfusion Imaging (3 hours):** Pharmacologic stress test using Lexiscan injection for vasodilation and increased coronary blood flow, along with nuclear perfusion imaging using Myoview before and after infusion. The test is for patients who cannot exercise on a treadmill. It is ordered for the same indications as NM Exercise MPI, it cannot, however, assess functional capacity. Unlike NM Exercise MPI, Lexiscan Lexi MPI is recommended for patients with LBBB or atrial fibrillation on EKG, those with a pacemaker or implanted defibrillator or people unable to tolerate adequate exercise on a treadmill.

**NOT RECOMMENDED** for patients with severe COPD or asthma with significant wheezing or advanced AV (heart) block.

**COST: \$\$\$**

**NM Dobutamine Myocardial Perfusion Imaging (3 hours):** Stress test using Dobutamine infusion for vasodilation and inotropic action, along with nuclear perfusion imaging using Myoview before and after infusion. Order for ischemic evaluation, history of CAD, to examine new EKG changes such as ST-T changes (i.e., ST depression, T wave inversion), for patients unable to tolerate adequate exercise on a treadmill, or those unable to tolerate a Lexiscan test due to severe reactive airway disease.

**NOT RECOMMENDED** for LBBB, paced rhythm, atrial fibrillation or significant ventricular ectopy.

**COST: \$\$\$**

**General Precaution: Avoid nuclear stress testing in women of child-bearing age.**

## Tilt Table Test Option

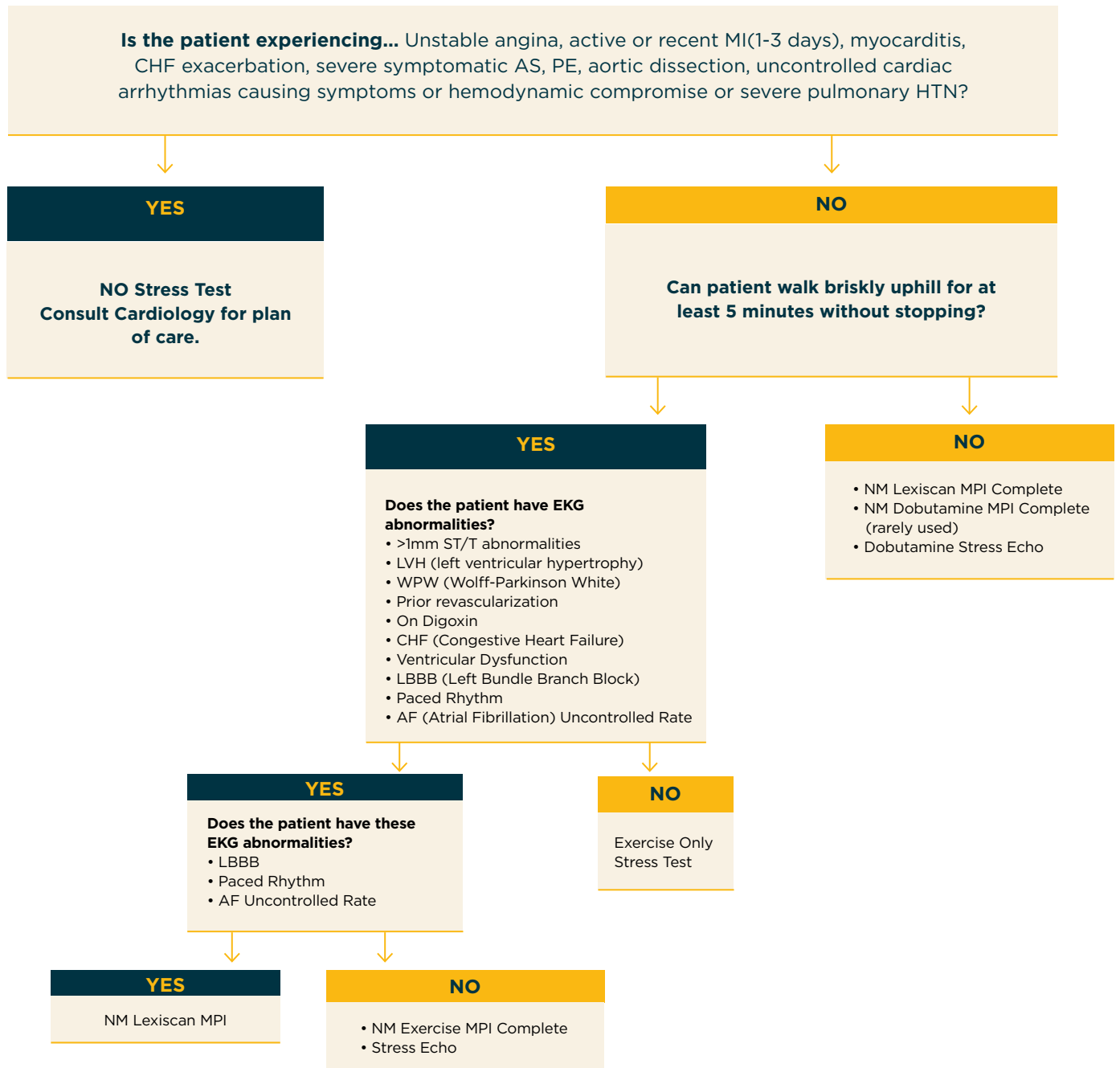
**Tilt Table Test (1 ½ hours):** For patients being evaluated for a cause of unexplained fainting/syncope, or pre-syncope. Motorized Tilt Table Test follows protocol wherein patient lies on a table that is tilted up to 75°-80° and will stand for up to 45 minutes or until loss of consciousness while on continuous EKG monitoring, frequent vitals and symptom assessment.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Patient will need recent echocardiogram and documented orthostatic vital signs prior to proceeding with this test.

**NOT RECOMMENDED** if patient is unable to stand in place for 45 minutes, has known or suspected ischemic heart disease, poorly controlled arrhythmias or unstable neurological symptoms. Not suitable for patients over 350 lb.

**COST: \$\$**

# ALGORITHM FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT STRESS TEST FOR YOUR PATIENT



**EKG:** Electrocardiogram

**MPI:** Myocardial Perfusion Imaging

**SPECT:** Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography

## \*Contraindications\*

**\*Lexiscan:** Bronchospastic airway disease, hypotension, sick sinus syndrome, high-degree atrioventricular block (without pacemaker) and oral dipyridamole therapy. Theophylline should be withheld 24 hours prior to test. Caffeine should be withheld at least 12 hours prior to test.

**\*Dobutamine:** Ventricular arrhythmias, recent myocardial infarction (1-3 days), unstable angina, hemodynamically significant left ventricular outflow tract obstruction, aortic dissection, severe aortic stenosis, atrial fibrillation or large aortic aneurysm.

## Consider when ordering:

**Women of child bearing age and/or breastfeeding:** Avoid nuclear testing (MPI) to avoid patient radiation exposure. Consider Exercise Only Stress Test if no imaging needed; Stress Echo if imaging needed; Dobutamine Stress Echo if non-ambulatory

**Echocardiogram complete (resting):** knowing baseline wall motion abnormalities, structural abnormalities, heart function, and valve disease prior to any stress test is important in completing a safe stress test. This is not included with Stress Echo, must be two separate orders



# NUCLEAR STRESS TESTING APPROPRIATE USE CRITERIA

Diagnostic cardiac testing involving imaging is under intense scrutiny from Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and other insurance payers. Therefore, stress test indicators should clearly match one of the following appropriate use criteria (AUC):

## Nuclear Stress Testing

### Symptomatic Patient:

- Ischemic equivalent (nonacute: typical or atypical chest pain, dyspnea, arrhythmia) with low functional capacity, marked EKG abnormality (including left bundle branch block) OR moderate/high likelihood of ischemia clinically
- Ischemic equivalent with abnormal or equivocal EKG treadmill (including low functional capacity) and low/moderate likelihood of ischemia clinically
- Typical angina, low or moderate clinical likelihood of ischemia
- Typical angina, high clinical likelihood of ischemia, conservative management
- New or worsening symptoms in a patient with known CAD
- Post revascularization (CABG or PCI) if symptomatic
- Post catheterization or CT angiography, evaluation of intermediate lesion
- Ventricular tachycardia, any level of risk of ischemia
- Congestive heart failure of uncertain etiology

### Asymptomatic Patient:

- Resting EKG markedly abnormal or suggesting antecedent myocardial infarction
- High risk of CAD (Framingham risk score, ATP III criteria).
- Abnormal or equivocal EKG treadmill test, particularly if low functional capacity
- Known CAD, last stress test more than two years ago (“uncertain” indication)
- Post catheterization or post CT angiography, evaluation of intermediate lesion
- Coronary calcium Agatston Score 100 to 400 if high clinical likelihood of myocardial ischemia
- Coronary calcium Agatston Score greater than 400
- Post coronary revascularization surveillance testing, more than two year following PCI
- Post coronary revascularization surveillance testing, more than five years after CABG

### Miscellaneous Indications for Radionuclide Stress Testing:

- New or recent onset CHF
- New or recent onset or worsening dilated cardiomyopathy
- Syncope, intermediate or high risk of myocardial ischemia
- Atrial fibrillation, intermediate or high risk of ischemia or consideration of type 1C antiarrhythmics

### Preoperative Evaluation for Noncardiac Surgery:

Intermediate or high (vascular) risk surgery, one or more clinical risk factors or poor uncertain functional capacity with no normal cath or radionuclide stress test within one year. These clinical risk factors are different than traditional coronary risk factors (i.e., smoking, hypertension, lipids, etc.):

1. History of ischemic heart disease
2. History of CHF
3. History of cerebrovascular disease
4. Diabetes mellitus
5. Renal insufficiency (creatinine greater than 2.0)
6. Poor exercise tolerance or functional capacity

## STRESS ECHO APPROPRIATE USE CRITERIA

### Stress or Dobutamine Echocardiography for Detection of CAD:

- Possible angina or ischemic equivalent, except in patients with LBBB or paced ventricular rhythm
- Women of child-bearing age where avoidance of radiation exposure is desirable
- Evaluation of a patient with new onset congestive heart failure (typically would use Cardiolite probably Lexiscan)
- Symptom evaluation status post PTCA or CABG
- Stress evaluation of patients with abnormal EKG (other than paced rhythm or LBBB)
- Sustained VT (avoid Dobutamine)
- Frequent PVCs, exercise-induced VT or nonsustained VT (avoid Dobutamine)
- Syncope in patients with moderate to high risk of CAD
- Coronary calcium Agatston score greater than 400
- Coronary artery stenosis of unclear significance from catheterization
- Abnormal or equivocal standard exercise test
- Worsening symptoms in a patient with CAD

### Perioperative Evaluation for Noncardiac Surgery:

- 1 or more clinical risk factor
- Poor or unknown function capacity (less than 4 METs)
- Moderate or high risk surgery

## TILT TABLE TESTING APPROPRIATE USE CRITERIA

- If the diagnosis is unclear after initial evaluation, tilt-table testing can be useful for patients with suspected vasovagal syncope (VVS)
- For patients with syncope and suspected delayed orthostatic hypotension when initial evaluation is not diagnostic
- Distinguish convulsive syncope from epilepsy in selected patients
- Establish a diagnosis of pseudosyncope

## ULTRASOUND AND VASCULAR TESTING

**Transthoracic Echocardiogram (1 hour):** Comprehensive evaluation of heart chambers, valves and great vessels utilizing two-dimensional ultrasound images and Doppler for quantification of ejection fraction, pulmonary arterial pressure, valve regurgitation and/or stenosis, etc.

- This is a good test for follow-up of heart valve replacement, medical management of heart failure or cardiomyopathy, coronary artery disease and in patients with other conditions or receiving treatment that may affect their cardiovascular health (i.e. autoimmune disorders, chemotherapy).

**Transesophageal Echocardiogram (2 hours):** Cardiac ultrasound images are obtained from a small ultrasound probe on the end of an endoscopic instrument that is passed down the esophagus while the patient is under conscious sedation.

- Superior image quality is made possible due to the close proximity of the esophagus to the heart structures.
- This test is preferred for close evaluation of heart valves when endocarditis or prosthetic valve dysfunction is suspected, for clear delineation of anatomy in patients with congenital heart defects or for suspected cardiac source of embolism.
- Requires ordering physician to discuss the indication of TEE with performing Cardiologist.



**Bilateral Carotid Artery Duplex (1 hour):** Ultrasound images with Doppler flow evaluation of all the major extracranial arteries, including the common carotid, vertebral and subclavian arteries if indicated.

- Common indications may include but are not limited to carotid bruit, source of embolism following transient ischemic attack or cerebrovascular accident, and follow-up of endarterectomy, carotid stents and known stenosis.

**Abdominal Aortic Ultrasound (1 hour):** Ultrasound images and measurements are obtained by imaging through the anterior abdomen.

- Test requires the patient to fast for at least four hours and is scheduled in the morning to avoid interference from bowel gas.
- Indications include family history of aneurysm, follow-up known AAA, pulsatile/palpable aorta on examination, and multiple risk factors for aneurysm. Also useful to evaluate atheromatous plaque and dissection affecting this area.
- Medicare has approved a screening AAU for patients over 65 years of age with certain risks as part of their Welcome to Medicare physical.

**Renal Artery Doppler (1 hour):** Comprehensive Doppler evaluation of renal artery blood flow, images obtained from the anterior abdomen and both flanks.

- This test requires the patient to fast for at least four hours, preferably overnight, and is scheduled as early in the morning as possible due to interference from bowel gas.
- Appropriate indications include refractory hypertension and abdominal bruit upon auscultation, as well as follow-up on known stenosis and prior stents or bypasses.

**Peripheral Arterial Physiologic Testing (1 hour):** Comprehensive evaluation of either the upper or lower extremity arterial system for symptoms of limb pain or signs of diminished blood flow.

- Testing may include ankle-brachial indices, Doppler waveform evaluation, segmental pressures, pulse volume recordings, and exercise ankle-brachial indices.

**Peripheral Venous Physiologic Testing (1 hour):** Evaluation of outflow of blood from the venous system in the lower extremities, along with evaluation for venous reflux or chronic venous insufficiency using air plethysmography.

**Venous Duplex (1-2 hour):** Ultrasound imaging of the upper or lower extremity venous system to assess for deep or superficial venous thrombosis or to evaluate for chronic venous insufficiency.

- Appropriate indications are acute unilateral extremity swelling accompanied with pain and redness, chronic bilateral extremity swelling, venous stasis changes, or varicose veins.

**Arterial Vasospastic Maneuver (1 hour):** Test involves blood pressures and temperature readings of the upper extremity digits before and after exposure to extreme cold.

- This test is helpful with the diagnosis of vasoconstriction in patients who experience symptoms associated with Raynaud's phenomenon (intermittent cyanosis or pallor of the digits following exposure to cold or emotional distress).

**Thoracic Outlet Testing (1 hour):** Evaluation of arterial flow in the patient's extremities, in various positions, associated with thoracic outlet syndrome symptoms.

*These general rules can assist you in ordering tests for your patients. For more information, visit the American College of Cardiology website at [www.acc.org](http://www.acc.org) or the American Heart Association website at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).*

# HEART SCORE SCREENING (CORONARY ARTERY CALCIUM SCORING)

Coronary artery calcification is nearly pathognomonic of coronary atherosclerosis and starts as early as the second decade of life. Rare exceptions to this rule include calcification of muscular media in hypervitaminosis D, infantile calcinosis, active HIV and extended dialysis. There is a strong association between coronary artery calcification and major cardiovascular outcomes in asymptomatic individuals. Coronary artery calcification can be measured with a simple non-contrast CT scan of the heart. This is reported as coronary artery calcium score (CAC score). This information can be used to identify people at higher risk of having an adverse cardiovascular event and to guide preventive therapy.

### Indications for Coronary Artery Calcium Score:

- Asymptomatic individuals without clinical atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD) who are 40-75 years of age in the 5-20% 10-year ASCVD risk group
- Asymptomatic individuals without clinical ASCVD who are 40-75 years of age in the less than 5% ASCVD risk group with a family history of premature CAD (defined as history of myocardial infarction, CABG, coronary stenting in first-degree male relative under 55 years of age and female relative under 65 years of age)

### CAC score risk classification and treatment recommendations<sup>1</sup>:

Score	Risk	Treatment Recommendations
0	Very low	Statin not recommended <sup>a</sup>
1-99	Mildly increased	Moderate intensity statin if <75th percentile Moderate to high intensity statin if >75th percentile
100-299	Moderately increased	Moderate to high intensity statin + ASA 81 mg
>300	Moderate to severely increased	High intensity statin + ASA 81 mg

<sup>a</sup>Excluding familial hypercholesterolemia

- Consider functional testing such as treadmill stress test, stress myocardial perfusion imaging or stress echo if CAC score is greater than 400 to rule out obstructive coronary artery disease.
- Recommend cardiology consultation if the stress testing demonstrates myocardial ischemia.

<sup>1</sup>SCCT 2017 Expert Consensus Recommendations

# CARDIAC MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING (CMR) IMPORTANT APPLICATIONS

## Heart Failure

- Assessment of LV and RV size, morphology, systolic and diastolic function and characterization of myocardial tissue to understand the etiology of LV systolic or diastolic dysfunction.
- For confirmation of presence of iron overload in heart and liver.
- Evaluation of LV function in CHF patients with technically limited echocardiograms.

## Coronary Artery Disease and Coronary Anomalies

- Useful for identification of coronary artery anomalies and aneurysms.

## Myocardial Infarction/Scar Assessment

- Late gadolinium enhancement CMR is useful for identifying the extent and location of myocardial scar in individuals suspected of having chronic or acute ischemic heart disease.
  - Assessing patients post myocardial infarction AND viability prior to revascularization
  - Establishing likelihood of recovery of function with coronary artery revascularization

## Non-Ischemic Cardiomyopathy/Myocarditis

- Assessment of patients with LV dysfunction or hypertrophy, or suspected forms of cardiac injury not related to ischemic heart disease.
- CHF of unclear etiology:
  - Evaluation of dilated cardiomyopathy in setting of normal coronary arteries
  - Positive cardiac enzymes without obstructive atherosclerosis on angiography
  - Suspected amyloidosis or other infiltrative diseases
  - Syncope or ventricular arrhythmia: HCM, ARVC/Dysplasia

## Assessment of Valvular Heart Disease

- Assessment of valvular stenosis, regurgitation, para or peri valvular masses, perivalvular complications of infectious processes, or prosthetic valve diseases are needed.
  - Applies to the following: Any regurgitant or stenotic lesions
  - Particularly useful in identifying serial changes in LV volumes or mass in patients with valvular dysfunction.

## Cardiac Masses

- Evaluation of cardiac masses, extracardiac structures, differentiation of tumors from thrombi.

## Pericardial Disease

- Comprehensive structural and functional assessment of the pericardium, evaluate the physiological consequences of pericardial constriction or suspected pericarditis and pericardial masses.

## Congenital Heart Disease

- Assessing cardiac structure and function, blood flow, shunt flow, and cardiac and extracardiac conduits in individuals with simple and complex congenital heart disease.
  - Common congenital conditions CMR can be utilized in:
    - Atrial septal defects
    - Ventricular septal defects
    - Patent ductus arteriosus
    - Coarctation of aorta
    - Certain complex congenital heart disease



# Diagnostic Testing Order - Heart and Vascular Institute

Page 1 of 1

Patient Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

## Patient Information

TODAY'S DATE	WEIGHT	PRIMARY INSURANCE CARRIER / DEMOGRAPHICS		
MAILING ADDRESS		CITY	STATE	ZIP
HOME PHONE NUMBER		ALTERNATE PHONE NUMBER: <input type="checkbox"/> Work <input type="checkbox"/> Cell Other: _____		
ORDERING PROVIDER	ORDERING PROVIDER'S PHONE	PERFORM TEST WITHIN Days: _____ Weeks: _____ Months: _____		

**Complete the indication on the line next to selected test(s) below.**

### Nuclear Medicine Myocardial Perfusion Imaging: (78452)

*Recommend recent echocardiogram prior to test*

☐ Treadmill Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Pharmacological\* Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

(\*select one) ☐ Lexiscan ☐ Dobutamine

**Pre-Authorization Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stress Echo: (93351)** Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Treadmill

☐ Dobutamine

**Pre Authorization Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

### ☐ Exercise Only Stress Test: (93015)

Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Tilt Table Test: (93660) Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

*Need documented orthostatic vs and recent echocardiogram*

☐ Echocardiogram: (93306) Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Carotid Ultrasound: (93880) Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other Test: \_\_\_\_\_ Diagnosis / Reason for Test: \_\_\_\_\_

Holter Monitor: ☐ 24 Hour ☐ 48 Hour

☐ Office Visit Needed

**Pre Authorization Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

Ordering Provider Name PRINT: \_\_\_\_\_

Ordering Provider Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please fax patient records to (605) 755-0604, including: EKG, office notes, any pertinent lab work or previous cardiac testing, a current medication list and this form.**

## CARDIOLOGY

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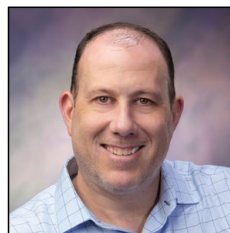


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# EVALUATION PEARLS

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## CRITERIA FOR ABNORMAL EKGS

EKGs are now read by automated computer algorithms and overread by cardiologists or primary care physicians. Computer readings are wrong 20-25% of the time. Computer-read EKGs should be overread and signed off by a physician before referral is triggered.

### **EKG abnormalities not in need of referral:**

- RBBB
- LAFB
- LPFB
- First degree AV block
- Non-specific ST-T abnormalities
- LVH with repolarization abnormalities
- Normal early repolarization abnormality
- Poor R wave progression
- PACs or PVCs
- Second degree type I AV block with no symptoms

### **EKG abnormalities justifying referral or further testing:**

- Diagnostic Q waves (abnormal)
- LBBB
- High degree AV block
- Corrected QT greater than 500msec in patients without RBBB or LBBB.
- Atrial flutter or fibrillation if a new finding.

Any EKG in the “grey zone” should be faxed to referral department at 605-755-0603 for review by the office call cardiologist who will make a recommendation for further testing and/or consultation.



## **GUIDELINES FOR DIZZINESS/LIGHTHEADEDNESS**

**The cause of the patient's dizziness is almost always found in the History and Physical:**

- Is it associated with a change in the patient's posture or head position?
- Is it associated with the time of taking vasoactive medicines?
- Is it triggered by exercise?
- Are relieving maneuvers or "avoidance" behaviors by the patient effective?
- Are symptoms associated with loss of consciousness?
- Carefully review the med list.
- Differentiate between vertigo and dizziness. Always think of potential neurologic and otologic causes.
- Are there any symptoms compatible with a cardiac tachy or brady arrhythmia?
- **Always check orthostatic vital signs with standing BP and pulse at 1 and 3 minutes.**
- Check blood pressures in both arms.
- Listen for carotid bruits.
- Is there a harsh, obstructive murmur?
- If there is history of recurrent syncope with suspicion for vasovagal/neurocardiogenic syncope, consider Tilt Table testing

**Testing should be streamlined based on your differential diagnosis gleaned from the patient evaluation. Some examples:**

- Carotid Doppler in patients with carotid bruits
- Carotid and subclavian Dopplers in patients with dizziness and unequal arm pressures
- Cardiac monitor in patients with a suspected brady or tachyarrhythmia
- Echo/Doppler in patients with harsh, obstructive sounding murmurs

**Referral to Cardiology is rarely necessary for patients with dizziness. We should see patients with:**

- Severe orthostatic hypotension or syncope where med changes don't solve the problem.
- Severe or critical carotid or vertebral arterial occlusive disease.
- Patients with subclavian steal syndrome.
- Patients with brady or tachy arrhythmias triggering their dizziness.
- Patients with significant aortic stenosis, CAD, cardiomyopathy etc.

*(This list is not meant to be comprehensive)*

# GUIDELINES FOR PALPITATIONS

## Initial evaluation prior to referral:

- Thorough history including caffeine use, alcohol use, energy drink use, decongestant use, street drug use, level of stress in patient's life, hx of sleep apnea, etc.
- 12 lead EKG
- Echo if patient has a murmur, abnormal EKG, or signs and symptoms of CHF
- Cardiac monitoring:
  - 24-hour or 48-hour Holter monitor in those with daily or frequent symptoms,\* or
  - 30-day event monitor for those with less frequent symptoms,\* or
  - 7 or 14-day mobile cardiac telemetry monitor (MCT -also known as ECAT) for continuous monitoring of the patient's rhythm. Useful if you suspect A fib, A flutter, SVT, or VT.  
**Note:** Commercial insurance carriers usually will not cover 7 or 14 day MCT monitors. Check before ordering. No problem in Medicare beneficiaries.
- \*Patient must be capable of pressing an event button on the monitor and making diary entries.

## When contemplating referral after the test results are back:

- Cardiology usually does not need to see patients with "rare," "occasional," or infrequent PACs and PVCs. Consider managing these patients with lifestyle changes or a low dose cardio-selective beta blocker such as metoprolol succinate or atenolol.
- Refer patients with A fib, A flutter, SVT, PAT, runs of non-sustained VT or those with sustained VT.
- High degree AV block can also cause patients to feel palpitations. They should be referred.

# PRE-OP CARDIAC EVALUATION PRIOR TO NON-CARDIAC SURGERY

## 1. Data required prior to evaluation:

- a. Complete H&P by primary or referring physician
- b. Pertinent cardiac records
- c. EKG in patients with coronary artery disease (CAD) or structural heart disease
- d. Echo in patients with dyspnea of unknown origin or patients with stable congestive heart failure (CHF) with worsening dyspnea, or CHF patients with echo older than 1 year

## 2. Low Risk Procedures That Do Not Need Pre-Op Cardiac Clearance\*:

- a. Endoscopic procedures
- b. Cataract surgery
- c. Dental procedures
- d. Breast surgery
- e. Plastic surgery
- f. Dermatologic surgery

**\*Caveat:** patients with asymptomatic, stable or controlled atrial arrhythmia; and controlled atrial fibrillation, do NOT need pre-op cardiac evaluation

## 3. Active Conditions That Require Pre-Op Cardiac Evaluation:

- a. Unstable angina
- b. Decompensated CHF
- c. Worsening or new onset CHF
- d. Symptomatic arrhythmias
- e. Severe valvular heart disease
- f. Functional capacity less than 4 METS
- g. Recent myocardial infarction (MI) (7 - 30 days)

## 4. High-Risk Non-Cardiac Surgical Procedures (>5%):

- a. Aortic and other major vascular procedures
- b. Peripheral vascular disease
- c. Anticipated, prolonged surgical procedures >2 hours

## 5. Intermediate-Risk Procedures (<5%):

- a. Carotid endarterectomy
- b. Head and neck surgery
- c. Intra-peritoneal or intra-thoracic surgery
- d. Orthopedic surgery
- e. Prostate surgery

## 6. Pre-Op Stress Testing: Reserved for patients with intermediate predictors\*:

- a. Mild angina pectoris (CCS, Class 1 and 2)
- b. Prior MI
- c. Compensated or prior CHF
- d. Diabetes mellitus who are undergoing intermediate or high risk procedures

**\*Caveat 1:** patients with previous coronary revascularization in the past five years who are clinically stable, do NOT need pre-op stress testing

**\*Caveat 2:** if the patient has undergone ischemic testing in the past two years, and the findings were favorable, repeat testing is not necessary

## PROSTHETIC HEART VALVE FOLLOW UP (ACC/AHA GUIDELINES 2014):

- The asymptomatic uncomplicated patient is usually seen at one-year intervals for a cardiac history and physical examination.
- An initial TTE study is recommended in patients after prosthetic valve implantation for evaluation of valve hemodynamics (ACC Level of recommendation: I, B).
- Repeat TTE is recommended in patients with prosthetic heart valves if there is a change in clinical symptoms or signs suggesting valve dysfunction (ACC Level of recommendation: I, C).
- Annual TTE is reasonable in patients with a bioprosthetic valve after the first 10 years, even in the absence of a change in clinical status (ACC Level of recommendation: IIa, C).
- Earlier evaluation may also be prudent in selected patients at increased risk of early bioprosthetic valve degeneration, including those with renal impairment, diabetes mellitus, abnormal calcium metabolism, systemic inflammatory disease and in patients less than 60 years of age.
- In patients with mechanical valve prostheses, routine annual echocardiographic evaluation is not needed if the postoperative baseline study is normal in the absence of signs or symptoms of valve dysfunction.

**Reference:** 2014 American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology Guideline for the Management of Patients With Valvular Heart Disease. JACC Vol 63, No.22, June 10, 2014

### Appropriate use criteria for echo follow up of valvular heart disease and prosthetic valves:

Appropriate use score (1-3 inappropriate, 4-6 uncertain, 7-9 appropriate)

#### Native Valvular Stenosis With TTE

- Routine surveillance (three or more years) of mild valvular stenosis without a change in clinical status or cardiac exam: Appropriate (7)
- Routine surveillance (one or more years) of moderate or severe valvular stenosis without a change in clinical status or cardiac exam: Appropriate (8)

#### Native Valvular Regurgitation With TTE

- Routine surveillance (one or more years) of moderate or severe valvular regurgitation without change in clinical status or cardiac exam: Appropriate (8)

#### Prosthetic Valves With TTE

- Initial postoperative evaluation of prosthetic valve for establishment of baseline: Appropriate (9)
- Routine surveillance (three or more years after valve implantation) of prosthetic valve if no known or suspected valve dysfunction: Appropriate (7)
- Evaluation of prosthetic valve with suspected dysfunction or a change in clinical status or cardiac exam: Appropriate (9)
- Re-evaluation of known prosthetic valve dysfunction when it would change management or guide therapy: Appropriate (9)

**Reference:** 2011 Appropriate Use Criteria for Echocardiography, JASE, March 2011



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