

# Heart Failure Evaluation

## ***What Causes Heart Failure?***

Heart failure is an illness caused when your heart is not able to pump blood throughout your body. Other diseases may increase your chances of developing heart failure. The most common are high blood pressure and blocked arteries to the heart.

## ***What Happens in an Evaluation?***

Your doctor will do a series of tests, or an evaluation, to find out how serious your heart problem is and what has caused it. This evaluation lets your doctor find the best treatment for you.

Your doctor will start with a complete physical examination and medical history. The medical history includes:

- Your personal risk factors for heart disease such as obesity and smoking, which increase your risk of heart failure
- Your family history
- Your current symptoms
- Any physical abilities that you are limited in and that could be linked to your heart

## ***What Other Tests Will You Have?***

Your first examination will help your doctor decide whether you need additional tests.

- Blood and urine tests show causes of heart failure and other health problems that can make heart failure worse.

These tests can tell your doctor whether an unusual problem caused your heart failure. They also tell how well your organs are working and what your cholesterol level is.

**What Other Tests Will You Have?**  
*continued*

- An electrocardiogram (i LEK troh KAHR dee uh gram), or EKG, measures the electrical impulses that come from the heart to show the overall health of your heart.
- An echocardiogram (ek o KAR de o gram) shows the heart's shape and size and what happens when the heart beats. This test can tell your doctor a lot about the kind of heart failure you have and what caused it.
- A “stress test” shows if you have serious artery disease and can tell you how much exercise is safe for you. The stress test is also called an exercise tolerance test. It is usually done on a treadmill.

In this test you walk quickly while your heart is monitored for signs of poor blood flow and heart rhythm problems.

**Glossary**

Term	Pronunciation	Definition
<b>Echocardiogram</b>	ek o KAR de o gram	A test that shows the heart's shape and size and what happens when the heart beats
<b>Electrocardiogram</b>	i LEK troh KAHR dee uh gram	A measure of the electrical impulses that come from the heart to show the overall health of your heart