



An initiative of the ABIM Foundation



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS



## Talk to Your Doctor About... When You Need Tests for Heart Disease — and When You Don't.

**THE PROBLEM** These might include a chest X-ray, blood and urine samples, or heart and lung tests.

**THE TESTS** An EKG, or electrocardiogram, and an exercise stress test, which is when you have an EKG while you exercise on a treadmill.

**WHEN YOU NEED THEM** Get the tests if you have chest pain, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of heart disease, or have a history of heart disease or are at high risk of it because of diabetes or other health problems.

**WHEN YOU DON'T** The tests usually are not necessary if you don't have symptoms. The tests are less accurate then, and can lead to unnecessary treatment. Lifestyle changes are often all that you need.

**WHAT TO DO** Talk with your doctor. That can help make sure that you get the right amount of care — not too much, and not too little.



## How to Protect Your Heart

- 1. Know your risk.** Factors such as your age, gender, cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and whether you smoke or have diabetes can help determine which screening tests are right for you and whether treatment is necessary.
- 2. Lower your risk.** Stop smoking; lose excess weight; engage in regular exercise, such as brisk walking; avoid food high in saturated fat, trans fats, and cholesterol; limit sodium; and talk with your doctor about possibly taking low-dose aspirin.
- 3. Have your blood pressure taken.** Make sure your doctor regularly checks your blood pressure, especially if you have hypertension or a history of heart disease.

<http://consumerhealthchoices.org/campaigns/choosing-wisely/>

### ✓ CHECK OUT OUR FREE REPORT

Use your smartphone to access the report on EKG and exercise stress tests for you to discuss with your physician as part of the *Choosing Wisely*® campaign.

