



What is the 6-Minute Walk Test?

The 6-minute walk test is a submaximal (meaning less than the full effort you are capable of) exercise test that measures the distance walked during 6 minutes. The 6-minute walk distance provides a measure for the integrated global response of the multiple cardiopulmonary (heart/lung) and musculoskeletal (muscle/bone) systems involved in exercise.

The 6-minute walk test provides information regarding functional lung capacity, response to therapy and prognosis across a broad range of chronic cardiopulmonary conditions. The main strengths of the 6-minute walk test stem from its simplicity. It is easily understood and performed, meaning that most patients are happy to do it, including those who are unfit, elderly or frail. It is also a very low-cost test and the results are easy to understand.

ABOUT THE 6-MINUTE WALK TEST

The 6-minute walk test is a measure of fitness and how your body functions. It helps your healthcare provider evaluate your ability to exercise, how effectively your lungs are working when stressed and how efficiently your body is accessing and using the oxygen required for activity. During this test, you walk at your normal pace for 6 minutes.

This test can help monitor your response to treatments for heart, lung and other health problems. This test is commonly used for people with pulmonary problems or chronic lung disease to assess lung function. The results of this test may lead your doctor or therapist to do more tests. They may also do further tests of your heart and lung function.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Preparing for your test:

- Wear clothes and shoes that are comfortable.
- It's OK to eat a light meal before your test.
- Take your usual medications.
- Do not exercise during the 2 hours before your test.

During the test:

- The person conducting the test will measure your blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level before you start to walk.
- You can use your usual walking aids, such as a cane or walker, if needed.
- If you typically use oxygen while walking, you can use it during your test.
- Let the testing staff know if you are having chest pain or breathing difficulty.
- You can slow down, rest or stop at any time during the test. After every minute, the tester will tell you how much time remains.

You will be given the following instructions:

- The purpose of the test is to walk as far as possible within 6 minutes.
- Walk at your normal pace to a chair or cone, turn around and walk back to where you started.
- Continue to walk back and forth for 6 minutes.

Ideally the length of each lap should be 30 metres. However, this may need to be adjusted and made shorter depending on available space, especially if you are performing a test at home or during lockdown with limited access to facilities. So the length of each lap may be shorter, but you continue to walk for the 6 minutes and then calculate how far you have travelled by multiplying the number of laps with the length of 1 lap. Provided the ground is level and flat and the same distance/route is used for re-testing then the results can be compared.

Safety:

- The tester will watch you for any difficulty breathing or chest pain.
- Oxygen and other supplies will be nearby if you need them.

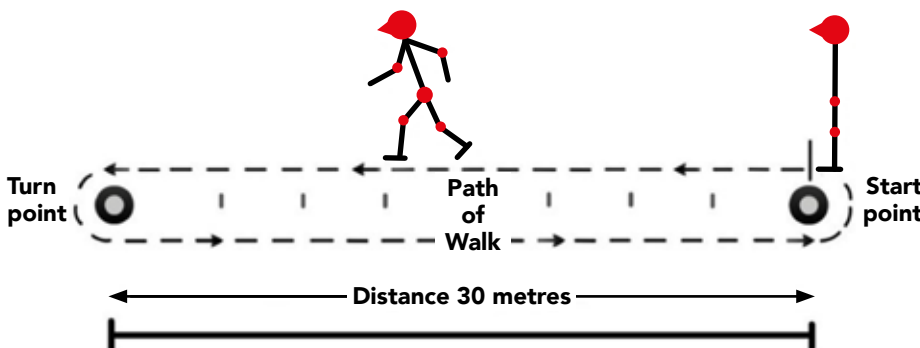
UNDERSTANDING THE RESULTS

The results of your test are compared with results that are typical for healthy people at your weight, height, sex and age. The test results can help estimate how well you are responding to treatment. Often, your therapist will ask you to repeat the 6-minute walk test after 6 months or a year.

Your therapist may change your exercise programme based on your test results.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

This is a low-risk medical evaluation. Medical help is available during the test.



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