

6 Minute Walk test: information for families

Children and young people may be referred for a test called the 6 Minute Walk test (6MWT). The test is a type of exercise test and can be used to assess your child's exercise tolerance. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) describes what to expect when your child is booked for a 6MWT test. An easy read information sheet is also included for your child.

What is the six minute walk test?

The 6MWT is an exercise test that measures how far your child can walk in six minutes. Your child will set the pace, the aim is to walk as many laps of a measured distance in six minutes. The test is used to assess the body's response to exercise.

At GOSH, the 6MWT is carried out by a respiratory physiologist in the lung function department. We perform the walk along a flat 10-metre corridor within the lab.

Do I need to bring anything?

You should receive a letter with the instructions on where to come for the test. Please ensure your child wears suitable, comfortable shoes to walk in and loose fitting clothing.

If your child uses supplemental oxygen (continuously or sometimes during the day), please bring this with you.

If your child uses walking aids (cane or walker for instance) please bring this with you to the appointment.

Children with respiratory or cardiac problems should use all regular medications on their daily schedule.

What happens before the six minute walk test?

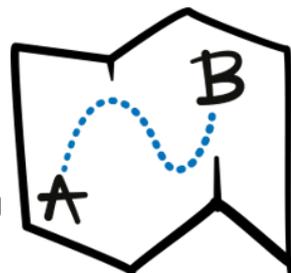
The physiologist will explain about the test in more detail on the day. We will ask for your permission (consent) to perform the test.

Important

The person bringing your child for the test should have 'Parental Responsibility' for them. Parental Responsibility refers to the individual who has legal rights, responsibilities, duties, power and authority to make decisions for a child. If the person bringing your child does not have Parental Responsibility, we may have to cancel the test.

What does it involve?

We will put a chair at the top of the corridor to mark out the walking distance, your child can take a seat there before starting. We will put an oxygen saturation probe onto your child's finger to measure the amount of oxygen in their blood and heart rate. Before the test starts, we will ask your child about their breathing and leg tiredness using a visual analogue scoring system – this is simply a scale to show the severity of their breathing and tiredness.



The physiologist will ask your child to walk as far as possible in the six minutes on their own. They should not run or jog so your child will set the pace of the walk. A physiologist may need to walk with your child if they are young or if an oxygen cylinder needs to be carried. Your child can use a walker or cane during the six minutes.

Your child will be allowed to slow down or rest whenever they feel they need to by sitting on a nearby chair or holding onto the handrails. Your child can stop the test if they feel they cannot continue.

Your child's heart rate and oxygen levels will be monitored, throughout the test. If your child's oxygen levels decrease below a certain level, the test may be stopped.

Once the 6 minutes is up, we will ask your child to complete the visual analogue score again. Your child will be allowed to rest for as long as they need to after the test.

Are there any risks?

Six minute walk tests carried out in hospital are very safe – the Physiologists are experienced in carrying out the test and safety equipment is available and will be used if necessary.

Your child's baseline oxygen saturations and heart rate will be assessed and, in some circumstances checked with a respiratory consultant before the 6MWT. If your child uses supplemental oxygen, the decision to perform on or off oxygen will be made by their consultant beforehand.

Your child will be monitored throughout the whole test and it will be stopped if your child's oxygen levels decrease below a certain level or if the physiologist feels the test is unsafe.

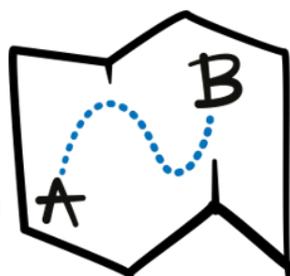
Getting the results

The results for you test will be uploaded onto our electronic patient record system for your doctor to view. If you are seeing your doctor in clinic or later that day, they will go through the results with you.

If you are not seeing the doctor that day, they will still be able to view your test results and contact you if your child needs to do anything before their next appointment.

Further information and support

If you need any further advice or information about the 6 Minute Walk Test you can contact the Lung Function Lab on 020 7405 9200 ext 5456 or via the MyGosh portal at www.gosh.nhs.uk/mygosh once you have registered.



Having a 6 Minute Walk test



Your doctor may want you to have a 6-minute walk test done if they want to find out about your exercise or activity levels.



Please make sure you wear trainers and comfortable clothing to your appointment. Please bring any walking aids you use when walking around.



If you use oxygen, please bring your cylinder or concentrator with you on the day.



The physiologist will ask you a few questions before the test to find out how much walking you do and if you get out of breath easily when walking.



Then you will be asked to walk for 6 minutes. No running just your normal walking speed!



You can rest whenever you need to if you are finding it difficult.



Once the exercise is finished, we will ask you 'how are you feeling?' and ask you the same questions we asked before the 6 minutes of walking.



You might meet the doctor that day to hear the results of the test or you will discuss the results of the test at your next appointment.



Please ask us if you have any questions.

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