

6-Minute Walk Test

The 6-minute walk test (6MWT) assesses the functional capacity of patients with heart failure.

Preferred Setting

- 30-meter distance
- Flat, straight, hard-surfaced corridor
- Indoors with comfortable ambient room temperature
- 3-meter intervals measured and marked
- Ends marked with cones or brightly colored tape

Required Equipment

- Stopwatch or timer
- 2 small cones, brightly colored tape for marking floor
- Chairs available near each lap boundary (in case patients require rest)
- Mechanical lap counter
- Resuscitation equipment

Patient Preparation

- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes
- Use any ordinarily used walking aids during the test
- Take regular medications on the day of the test
- A light meal is acceptable before morning or afternoon testing
- No vigorous exercise within 2 hours of beginning the test

1 Baseline assessment of patient while resting comfortably for 10 minutes

- Heart rate
- Blood pressure
- Oxygen saturation (optional)

2 Patient stands and the Borg scale is used to rate:

- Dyspnea
- Fatigue

3 Patient moves to the starting point

- Timer set to 6 minutes
- Lap counter set to zero
- Any other necessary equipment is assembled

4 Testing supervisor may demonstrate performance of the test

- Walk a lap
- Pivot briskly around the cones or at the marked ends

5 Begin the test when the patient is ready

- Patients may slow down or stop and resume walking as soon as possible
- Testing supervisors may provide encouragement

6 Stop the test

- Stop after 6 minutes has elapsed
- Immediately stop if the patient develops chest pain, intolerable dyspnea, leg cramps, staggering, diaphoresis, or pale or ashen appearance

7 Post-test Patient Assessment

- Borg scale rating:
 - Dyspnea
 - Fatigue
- Oxygen saturation (optional)
- Heart rate (optional)
- Record the reason for stopping the test

8 Record the distance walked

- Round the distance to the nearest meter

American Thoracic Society. ATS statement: guidelines for the six-minute walk test. Published March 2002. Accessed October 30, 2020. <https://www.thoracic.org/statements/resources/pfet/sixminute.pdf>