

## Tilt table test

This information sheet has been designed to provide patients with information on tilt table tests and what to expect if they require one.



### What is a tilt table test?

A tilt table test is used to help establish the cause of fainting and falls. It may also help the doctor to decide the best treatment.

A tilt table test allows the doctor to observe changes in your pulse and blood pressure when you go from lying down to being upright and remain upright for up to 35 minutes.

The test will normally be done as an outpatient. Prior to the appointment your doctor will advise if you need to stop any tablets and whether you should fast.

If possible, you should go for the test accompanied by a relative or friend.

### Who may need a tilt table test?

Patients who experience symptoms of loss of consciousness (blackouts), dizziness or severe light-headedness along with being unable to stand for any length of time, may need a tilt table test if a doctor suspects that changes in blood pressure or heart rate may be the cause.

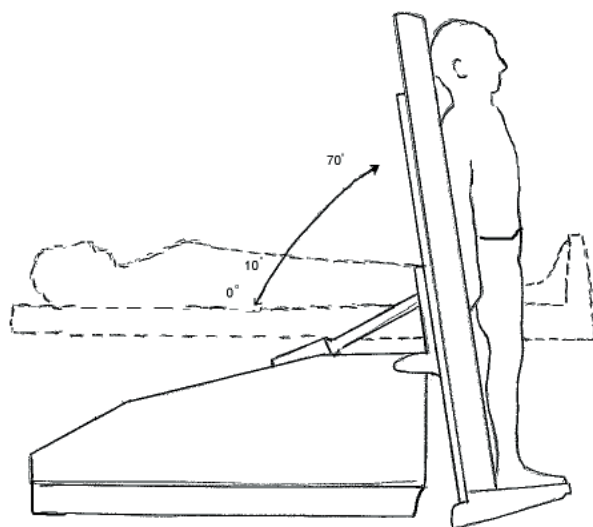
Normally blood pressure and heart rate will change according to the body's needs (sleeping or exercising) but if it is thought that your body is not responding properly, causing syncope (medical term for a faint) or symptoms of dizziness and nausea (pre-syncope), then a tilt test may be requested.

### How long will a tilt table test take?

When you arrive at the hospital, you will be asked to change into a hospital gown and possibly remove any make-up. This is so the practitioner, monitoring your test, can note the pallor of your skin should the test induce a drop in your blood pressure/heart rate. Safety belts will be placed around your body to make you feel secure as you are tilted to an upright position. There will be a footplate at the bottom of the bed to rest your feet.

Electrode stickers and leads will be attached to your chest in order to monitor your heart rate and rhythm during the test. A small cuff to measure your blood pressure will also be placed around your arm or finger. You will feel the cuff inflate and deflate throughout the test.

Your tilt table test will be performed in a quiet, warm room and it will be monitored by a medical professional who is experienced in performing this test.





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While you lie quietly on the table, recordings of your blood pressure and heart rhythm will be taken and monitored during the test. The table will then move slowly up and forwards until you are in an almost upright position.

Most procedures today will include a drug challenge. You will be lying on your back for five minutes, upright at 60 – 70 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes, and then a drug such as GTN (Nitroglycerine a drug used to treat heart pain that can lower blood pressure) is sprayed under the tongue, while the upright position is maintained for a further 15 minutes. This is to improve the sensitivity of the test (make it more likely to give a diagnosis).

### How will you feel during the test?

The symptoms that you may experience during the test include lightheadedness, nausea, feeling cold (or hot) and clammy, sweating, a 'spacey' feeling or the sensation that you are about to faint/blackout (pre-syncope symptoms). If you do lose consciousness, this normally will only last for a short period of time, the bed will be lowered to a lying position while you recover.

Some people will develop symptoms even though their blood pressure remains normal. This would be considered a negative test but still may be helpful. Others lose consciousness without being aware of having done so. This is also a helpful result.

You can ask for the test to be stopped at any time.

### How long will a tilt test take?

The test will last for up to 45 minutes. The length of time the test will take depends on when, or if, you experience changes in blood pressure or heart rate. Some people will demonstrate this within the first few minutes, while others may finish the complete test without any reaction. If there is no

reaction this would be classed as a negative test. If no results are recorded, the bed will be lowered to the lying position and the test is then finished. You will be allowed to recover fully before standing up and getting dressed.

### What happens after the test?

If you develop changes in blood pressure/heart rate with associated symptoms, your test will be classed as positive. You may experience all the usual sensations that occur during and after a natural episode.

Even if you have a negative test, it is common to report feeling tired but otherwise fine.

Normally the results of your test will be reported to your doctor. An appointment will be made for you to return to discuss these and any further treatment options that may be appropriate. Very occasionally patients do receive the results on the day.

### Going home!

It is recommended that you are, accompanied by a friend, or relative to drive you home after the test. You may also wish to bring a change of clothes as very few but some people may, experience loss of bladder control or vomiting during the test.

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Please remember that this publication provides general guidelines only. Individuals should always discuss their condition with a healthcare professional. If you would like further information or would like to provide feedback please contact STARS.