

Tilt table test

Information and advice for patients

Cardiology Diagnostics

Welcome to the Cardiology Diagnostics Department where we perform a wide range of cardiac investigations. Our staff aim to provide a high-quality service to meet your needs and welcome any suggestions for improvements. We hope you find this leaflet helpful and look forward to seeing you.

What is the test?

A tilt table test is designed to look at how your body responds to standing upright for a long period of time. You may be referred for this test if you have had episodes of fainting, collapse or passing out (syncopal episodes) with an unknown cause. It aims to induce your symptoms in a controlled and safe environment where you can be monitored.

What are the benefits?

The tilt table test records the syncopal episodes or palpitations whilst standing that you have been experiencing.

What are the risks?

Tilt table tests are generally very safe. You will be closely monitored throughout the test and be comfortably secured to the table. There will be 2 members of staff who will assist you during the test.

As the test is usually undertaken to induce your symptoms whilst monitoring your heart rate and blood pressure, there is a risk that you will faint. You'll most likely recover once the table is lowered and you are lying flat. Very occasionally, you may need some medication to help you recover.

What are the risks of not having the test?

If you choose not to have the Tilt Table Test this may delay your doctor finding out what is causing your symptoms and starting treatment.

Are there any alternatives to this test?

Please discuss with your healthcare provider if you would like to consider other forms of testing.

Preparing for the test

You must not eat or drink anything (including water) for 2 hours prior to this test. You must not have caffeine containing drinks (tea, coffee, energy drinks) for 5 hours prior to this test. If you take beta-blockers, please let us know so we can advise if these need to be stopped.

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We advise for you to bring a companion with you or do not drive yourself, in case you feel unwell following the test.

During the test

You will be escorted to a private room for you to remove your clothing from the waist up. You will be provided with a hospital gown.

While standing we will apply some stickers (called electrodes) around your chest area and a finger cuff will also be attached to 2 of your fingers with an attachment to your lower arm. A blood pressure cuff will also be attached to the other upper arm.

This equipment is used to continuously monitor your heart rate, rhythm, and blood pressure throughout the test.

You will be secured to the tilt table using fabric straps. For your safety a support will be provided for you to rest your arm with the finger cuff attachments.

The table will tilt you upwards at a 70-degree angle until you are practically standing upright. You will stay in this position for up to 20 minutes.

During the test the room will have low lighting and the technicians will sit quietly behind you. You will be monitored throughout the test to see if there are any changes in your heart rate, rhythm, or blood pressure.

You will be able to talk to the technicians in the room at any point during the test, if you need to inform them of any changes or symptoms.

During the test you may be administered glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) which helps us assess what might be causing your symptoms. It is administered as a spray under the tongue.

The medication can cause a headache, but this doesn't usually last very long.

After the test

After the test you will be helped off the table and get dressed before you are given your results. If you have had a fainting attack, it may take you longer to recover and we may ask you to wait until you are feeling well before returning home. You will be given your results and any necessary information leaflets.

Going home

Following the test and a full recovery, you can go home. We advise you to rest and not drive for the remainder of the day if you have fainted during the test. In addition to this, keep yourself well hydrated and follow any other guidance issued on the day.

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Follow-up

Your results will get sent to the consultant who has requested your test, along with a copy to your GP. These should arrive within 2 weeks. If you don't receive your results in 2 weeks, please contact your consultants secretary.

Contact details

You will be able to ask any questions or tell us any concerns before the test is carried out but if you would like to contact us before your appointment, please call us on:

Tel: 0121 507 6295 - Birmingham Treatment Centre

Tel: 0121 507 3512 - Sandwell General Hospital

Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 4:00pm

Further information

British Heart Foundation

Tilt test

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/tests/tilt-test>

(Website accessed 22/11/2023)

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