

Tilt Table Test

The tilt table test can help determine how your body responds to changes in position and susceptibility to syncope also known as the “common faint.” Syncope results when the brain does not receive sufficient blood flow and oxygen. The most common type of syncope is termed vasovagal syncope.

The tilt table test is designed to induce syncope under controlled conditions and is especially useful for diagnosing vasovagal syncope or underlying heart arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms).

Before the test

- You will be instructed not to eat and to only drink water for approximately 4 hours before your test.
- Make arrangements for someone to drive you home safely after the test.
- Check with your doctor on whether to stop certain medications to enable a more accurate test.
- Bring a list of all medications.

Informed Consent

It is a requirement by law that we receive your consent prior to performing your test. It is important that you understand what the test is about, how it is done and what the risks are. If you have any questions please feel free to ask either the technician or the testing doctor who will be with you when you sign the form.

How is the test done?

The test is performed by a doctor and a cardiac technician who will monitor your blood pressure, heart rate and heart rhythm. Small sticky pads called electrodes are attached to the chest to record the ECG. The electrodes need to have good contact with the skin to record the electrical impulses from your heart. Men with hairy chests will be shaved in the spots where the electrodes will be placed. The technician will also give your skin a little scrub with rough paper and then a wipe with alcohol. This removes the dead skin cells which form a barrier. You will find that this may sting a little and may leave red patches on your skin. This is normal and may take a couple of days to go away. Some patients with extra sensitive skin may develop small blisters from the gel used on the electrodes. This is rare and will heal quickly. A blood pressure cuff will also be placed on your arm to monitor your blood pressure and safety straps will be applied across your chest and legs.

Once you are set-up the table is then tilted so that your head is almost upright (70 degrees) and your blood pressure and heart rhythm are continuously monitored in the tilted position for approximately 40 minutes. After 20 minutes if no fainting symptoms or syncope occurs, the doctor will administer nitrolingual spray under your tongue. This spray is administered in an attempt to induce a fainting event and may give you a slight headache and/or dizziness after a few minutes.

At any time during the test you may get symptoms that you previously experienced when you fainted, if this occurs it is very important to notify the doctor or technician. If you experience symptoms and have considerable changes in blood pressure and heart rate, the table will be lowered to the flat position and the test ceased.

Is the test safe?

Tilt table tests are generally safe. The test is designed to mimic a fainting spell therefore it may cause you to feel faint for a few moments. Should this happen, the table is lowered quickly and highly trained staff are able to handle any emergencies that may arise.

How do I get my results?

A cardiologist will discuss the result with you upon completion of the tilt test.

A report will also be sent to your referring doctor (usually within 24 hours). Your doctor can then also discuss your results at your next appointment.