

Having a tilt table test to help find the cause of dizziness, fainting or blackouts

Respiratory Physiology Department

Information for Patients

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What is a tilt table test?

A tilt table test allows a doctor to see changes in your heart rate and blood pressure when you go from lying down to a standing up position. Your heart rate and blood pressure are measured while you lie on a specially designed bed. This can be slowly tilted upright.

You have been referred for a tilt table test to see if we can find out the cause of your symptoms. This test is useful if you have suffered from falls, giddy spells, dizziness or faints/ blackouts, which may be due to your blood pressure or heart rate.

Where do I need to go?

Please come through the **South Entrance of Glenfield Hospital**. The department is on the right hand side as you come through the entrance doors. Please come to the reception desk. A staff member will then take you to the testing room.

Due to the nature of the test, the testing room needs to be as relaxed and as quiet as possible. We kindly ask any relatives or friends to stay in our reception area.

What does the test involve?

There will be a highly experienced physiologist with you during the test. A doctor will oversee the test.

1. The physiologist will ask you to lie down on a special bed called a tilt table.
2. A strap will be placed across your knees and middle to help make sure you feel secure.

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

3. You will have stickers put on your chest and stomach to check your heartbeat.
4. You will have a blood pressure cuff on 1 of your arms and a smaller cuff on 2 of your fingers. The finger cuff (which pumps up and down during the test in time to your pulse) measures the blood pressure of every heartbeat. All these measurements will be displayed on a computer screen behind you.

You can rest for a few minutes once the measurements have been taken. A senior physiologist/doctor will then come in to start the test. They will talk to you about the test and you can ask any questions that you may have.

If you are older than 45 years of age:

Before the bed is tilted the doctor may want start by having a listen to both sides of your neck with a stethoscope. They may then want to rub (for 5 seconds) quite firmly on each side of your neck. This is done to see if your heart rate slows slightly or if your blood pressure falls, and brings on any of your symptoms.

At this point you may need an injection of a drug called atropine into a vein in your hand, which makes sure your heart rate does not slow down. The doctor will then repeat the neck rub.

This process may also be repeated in the tilted position.

Risks of the neck rub:

If the artery wall in the neck is already badly damaged, it is possible that the neck rub could cause a stroke. The chances of this occurring are rare (1 in 1500 patients).

It is possible to have the test without the neck rub and sometimes it is not needed. However if you decide not to have this part done at all, the information we get from the test might not be enough to find out the cause of your symptoms.

The bed is then tilted very slowly electronically until your head is upright and you are in an almost standing position, with your feet on a platform.

You will stay in this position for about 40 minutes whilst your heart rate and blood pressure are checked. During this time you may **have** your symptoms.

At the end of 40 minutes if you have not had any of your symptoms, you may be given a drug sprayed into your mouth. This drug can help reproduce symptoms similar to those you have **had** (dizzy, faint). You are then monitored in the standing position for another 10 minutes.

Once the test is finished, the bed is lowered slowly back to a lying position and all of the stickers and equipment are taken off.

How long will the test take?

The tests will last about 1 hour **but** you will be in the department for longer. This is to set up all the equipment and to make sure you are fully recovered before you go home.

You can expect to be in the department for **about 2 hours** but this can vary for each patient.

Are there any risks with the test?

The test is extremely safe.

The reason you are having this test is to try to find the cause of your symptoms and you may have these during the time you are with us. If your symptoms include faints/ blackouts (loss of consciousness), it is possible that this might occur during the test. All of the doctors and physiologists performing this test are experienced. It is usually possible to stop the testing before you have any loss of consciousness.

How do I prepare for the test?

- Please contact the department on 0116 258 3420 or email us at respiratoryservice@uhl-tr.nhs.uk to confirm your attendance, or to rearrange as soon as possible.
- It is strongly advised that you come with a friend or relative so they can drive you home in case your symptoms are brought on during the test.
- Please **fast (no food or drink) for 4 hours** before your appointment time, but you can drink water if you need to. If you are diabetic, please eat and drink (no caffeine) as you normally would.
- Please wear a short sleeved top and trousers rather than a dress or long tunic.
- It is important that you do not wear support or compression stockings during the test.
- You should ideally wear flat, comfortable shoes.
- Please continue with all medication as prescribed, unless told not to by your doctor or your enclosed appointment letter. If you are not sure about this, please ask.
- Please bring a list of your current medication (and dosage) with you.

Contact details

Respiratory Physiology Department: 0116 258 3420 or email address: respiratoryservice@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

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