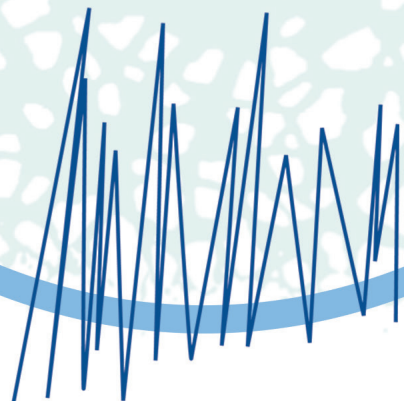


Head up tilt testing (HUTT)

A patient's guide



Introduction

This guide is for patients who are having a tilt test. It explains what is involved and any risks associated with the procedure.

A tilt test is used to investigate people who have had frequent episodes of syncope (fainting, collapsing or passing out) which are not thought to be caused by abnormal heart rhythms or structures.

Why might I need a tilt test?

If you're having dizzy spells or are blacking out, your doctor may refer you for a tilt test to see if your symptoms are related to a change in your blood pressure or heart rate.

It is used for people who have collapsed several times and where:

- The cause is suspected to be an abnormal change in blood pressure and heart rate related to changes in body position.
- The person has no structural problems with their heart.

- No abnormal heart rhythm has been found on ECG recordings.

What can the test show?

During the test, the cardiac physiologist will try to reproduce your symptoms under controlled, safe conditions. Your heart rate and blood pressure are monitored continuously during the test to help find out why you've been having these symptoms. This may help your doctor to diagnose what's causing your symptoms. Even if your test is negative, the information collected can be useful for future tests and treatments.

What does the test involve?

Your tilt test appointment can last between one to two hours. Two cardiac physiologists will conduct the test. The tilt test is carried out in a quiet, dark room to help you relax. For this reason, family and friends cannot be present during the test.

The cardiac physiologists will go through your medical history and consent you for the test.

Once you have consented to the procedure, they may ask you to undress to the waist and wear a gown, to place four small sticky pads called electrodes on your chest. This is then connected to an electrocardiogram (ECG).

A blood pressure monitor will be attached to your finger and arm.

You will be asked to lie on your back on the tilt table for five minutes. Safety support straps will be secured to prevent any movement in the event of a fainting episode.

After the five minutes, the bed will be slowly tilted upwards to around 70 degrees, so that you're nearly stood upright, with your feet resting on a foot plate. You will be in a tilted position for 10 minutes, or until you feel dizzy or faint and show a change in your heart rate and / or blood pressure. You can ask for the test to stop at any time if you feel you can't continue. However, once stopped the test cannot be restarted.

If you are still feeling well, you may be given a glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray under your tongue and tilted for another 10 minutes. This can help reproduce your symptoms by dilating the blood vessels and lowering the blood pressure.

At the end of the test, you'll be allowed to sit up and given a glass of water.

Seeing how quickly the symptoms you experience disappear, and how quickly your blood pressure and heart rate improve, will help the doctors to make a diagnosis and work out the best treatment for you.

The test doesn't hurt, but sometimes people can feel light-headed or feel faint either during or after the test. It is common for people to feel anxious about this test and the possibility of bringing on dizzy spells or fainting. However, any symptoms brought on via the test usually resolve quickly on returning you to a supine (flat) position.

What are the risks of having a tilt test?

The is a possibility of the test provoking a black out. If this occurs the team will lay you flat and in the majority of cases this is all that is needed to recover. In rare occurrences patients may need some additional time and monitoring to recover fully.

How can I prepare for this test?

Please arrive promptly for your appointment to allow sufficient time to carry out the test.

Have a light meal and a drink of water two to three hours before your test. Don't eat or drink again until after your test.

Avoid caffeine for eight hours prior to the test.

Before attending the test, please contact your GP for advice if you are prescribed any of the following medications, as you will need to stop taking them for 24 hours prior to the test:

- sildenafil
- tadalafil
- vardenafil
- avanafil

Please wear loose clothing so that we can easily carry out ECG and blood pressure recording.

Due to the nature of the test, you will not be able to drive for the rest of the day. Therefore, it is advisable to arrange for a family member or friend to collect you after the test is completed.

Before commencing the test, please make sure to notify the cardiac physiologist of any pre-existing conditions such as any heart conditions, previous stroke or transient ischemic attacks (TIA).

What happens after the procedure?

You will be asked to drink some water and possibly eat some food. You will need to wait in the waiting area until you feel well enough to leave.

Sometimes it is necessary to allow patients to recover on our day ward but in both scenarios the test results will go back to your GP and the Royal Papworth cardiology team.

Are there any alternative tests available?

There are several tests such as 24 hour ECG monitoring, cardiac event monitors and implantable loop recorders (ILRs) that can look for issues related to your heart rate and ECG. Also, ambulatory 24 hour blood pressure monitors can be used to look at changes in your blood pressure over time.

The tilt test looks at the relationship between blood pressure and heart rate on a beat-to-beat basis and this combined with the provocative nature of the test means it is a valuable tool for uncovering the causes of dizziness, blackouts and postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS).

Where can I find out more information?

- British Heart Foundation website: [bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/tests/tilt-test](https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/tests/tilt-test)
- Arrhythmia Alliance website: [heartrhythmalliance.org/aa/uk/treatments/tilt-table-test-ttt](https://www.heartrhythmalliance.org/aa/uk/treatments/tilt-table-test-ttt)

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