

Tilt Table Testing

What is a tilt table test?

A **tilt table test** is a test we can use to find the cause of your unexplained lightheadedness or fainting (passing out). During tilt table testing, we use a special table or bed that changes your position from lying down to standing up. A nurse or technician watches your blood pressure, heart rhythm, and heart rate (pulse) while you are in these different positions to see how they are affected.

Why do I need a tilt table test?

Providers use tilt table tests find out why you get lightheaded or faint. During the test, we will try to trigger (cause) the symptoms you have been experiencing at home while watching you and your blood pressure, heart rate, and heart rhythm.

If your blood pressure or heart rate drops during the test, you may feel lightheaded or faint. This happens when your brain isn't getting enough blood at that moment. The tilt table test helps to see if your symptoms are possibly caused by your heart rate not adjusting as the table tilts upward, or by your blood vessels not squeezing hard enough to support your blood pressure.

Sometimes during this test, your symptoms will not be triggered and there will be no change in your blood pressure, heart rate, or heart rhythm to explain the symptoms you are experiencing. In that case, there are other reasons for lightheadedness or fainting which can be tested further by your medical team. Some of these other causes include:

- Taking certain medications
- Severe dehydration (not getting enough fluids)
- Abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias)
- Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)
- Being on bed rest for a long time
- Certain nervous system disorders that cause low blood pressure

What can I expect from a tilt table test?

You will get your tilt table test in the Cardiac Procedures Unit (CPU) in the Cardiovascular Center. The test has 2 parts, and it usually takes between 40-90 minutes to complete both parts. For the first few minutes of the test, you will be lying flat. After that, you will be upright for the rest of the test.

How do I prepare for my tilt table test?

- Don't eat or drink for at least 6 hours before the test.
- If you take medications, ask your provider if you should keep taking it on your regular schedule before the test.
- You will need to find a responsible adult (18 years or older) to drive you to and from your appointment. They must be with you at check in and discharge. You will not be able to drive yourself home.
- On the day of the test, dress comfortably. Wear a 2-piece outfit (separate top and bottoms). You will need to undress from the waist up and put on a short hospital gown.

What can I expect before my test?

- We will bring you into the pre-procedure area, and you will change into a gown. Depending on your age and gender, we may ask you to take a pregnancy test during this time.

- After changing into your gown, you will lie down on a special motorized table. For your safety, we will strap you onto the table. Soft fabric straps (like seat belts) are placed at your chest, waist, and thighs to help you stay in position.
- We will use a needle to place an intravenous catheter (flexible tube) in your veins to give you fluids and medications during the test.
- We will place small electrode patches on your chest to measure your heart rate and rhythm during the test.
- We will place a cuff on your arm to measure your blood pressure.

What will happen during my test?

For the best test results, please follow these directions:

- Stay as still and as quiet as possible during the test.
- Don't move your legs while you are in the standing position.
- Try not to talk unless you need to.
 - Tell the nurse if you feel uncomfortable at any point.
 - Tell your provider about any symptoms (nausea, sweating, lightheadedness, or irregular heartbeats) you have during the test.

Part 1:

During this part, we will test **how your body responds when you change positions.**

- You will lie flat on your back on the motorized table for 5 minutes.
- We will check your blood pressure and heart rate.
- After 5 minutes, we will tilt the table up to 70 degrees for up to 20 minutes.
- During this time, if you experience near-fainting symptoms, if you have nausea or vomiting, or if you pass out, your nurse will lower the table and stop the test.

Part 2:

During this part, we will test **how your body responds to a medication that relaxes your blood vessels.**

- If the first part of the test didn't cause any symptoms, your nurse will give you a medication called **nitroglycerin** under your tongue. Nitroglycerin works by relaxing the blood vessels in your body. We use it to try to trigger the symptoms you have been experiencing at home.
- If you do not experience symptoms after about 20 minutes, the nurse will lower the table and your test will be over. If you do experience severe symptoms at any point during the test, the nurse will lower the table to the flat position and stop the test.

What can I expect after my tilt table test?

- You may feel tired and a little sick to your stomach right after the test.
- You will stay in the recovery area for about 20-60 minutes so the nurses can watch your blood pressure and heart rate. Any medications we used during the test should leave your system within 15 minutes.
- Most people can go back to their normal activities after this recovery period. However, if you lose consciousness (faint or pass out) during the test, you may need to have more observation and testing.

How do I learn about my tilt table test results?

A provider will review your results and talk with you about them after your procedure is over. We will also send the results to the doctor who ordered the test.

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