

Upright Tilt Table Test

An upright tilt table test is prescribed for people who have a history of recurrent syncope (passing out) or pre-syncope (almost passing out). Your physician will perform this test to discover if you exhibit this one particular cause for passing out. This cause is termed "vaso-depressor syncope". This condition is caused by an imbalance of the nerves that normally control your heart and blood pressure. The abnormal response of the nerves slows the heart down and causes the blood pressure to drop inappropriately. The person experiences a temporary loss of consciousness. If you are diagnosed with neurally mediated syncope, it can usually be treated with a medication and medical measures that can decrease this overreaction of the nerves and prevent these episodes from continuing.

Before the test, you will be asked not to eat or drink anything for a specified period of time. This is to prevent you from becoming nauseated while the test is being performed. Expect to sign an informed consent form for the procedure. You are encouraged to ask your doctor, nurse or the staff any questions you may have regarding the procedure or what to expect. You will receive an intravenous line to provide access for laboratory personnel to give you fluids and medications, prescribed by your doctor, during the test. The test is performed using a special table called a tilt table. You will be instructed to lay down on the tilt table. Monitoring equipment will be applied: a heart monitor, blood pressure cuff and an oxygen saturation measuring device. You will be monitored closely during the procedure. Safety straps will also be applied across your chest and across your legs.

To perform the test, the doctor adjusts the degree of tilt, with a hand control, to an almost standing position (70 to 80 degrees). The length of time you stand is based on a written protocol and how you tolerate the test. The doctor may also choose to give you an adrenalin-like medication to increase your heart rate and simulate exercise while you are on the table. This medication may cause you to feel your heart pound. Once the medication is stopped, you quickly return to feeling normal again. If you are feeling like you will pass out, it is important to relay these symptoms to the doctor and/or nurse.

As soon as the test is completed, the doctor will be able to give you the results and make recommendations for treatment. There are no bedrest or activity restrictions expected of you once you have completed the test. You will need someone to drive you home.