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Together*

## Patient information

### Autonomic Function Test (AFT)

Medical Directorate

## **Autonomic Function Test (AFT)**

The following notes are meant to help you understand what an AFT is and why your Doctor has ordered one for you. However, if you have any further questions which are not explained below, please do not hesitate to ask any of the staff in the department or phone the department.

### **What is the purpose of an AFT?**

The autonomic nervous system controls the function of your internal organs, such as your heart rate, the movement within your stomach and intestines, and modulation of your blood pressure. Autonomic nerve fibres are small fibres similar to the nerve fibres which transmit pain.

A person diagnosed with dizziness, falls, orthostatic hypotension (low blood pressure when getting up to stand) may benefit from having these tests. Persons with Parkinson's disease, diabetes or multi-system atrophy will also benefit from these tests.

### **What are the risks of having an AFT?**

This is a very safe procedure. However, as with many procedures, it does carry risks. There is a very small risk of feel dizzy or faint during the procedure, some patients with very sensitive skin may experience minor skin irritation where electrodes are placed, but this usually goes away without treatment, but serious consequences are rare. If you are worried please discuss before the test with the physiologist performing it.

### **Are there any alternatives available?**

There are no alternative tests which can provide a consultant with the detailed information gained by an AFT.

Any issues you may have regarding this test must be discussed with your referring consultant.

## **What will happen if I don't have any tests?**

Deciding your management will be based largely on clinical factors, i.e. the history and examination.

### **Before the test.**

- The physiologist will explain the procedure to you and offer you the opportunity to ask any questions that you might have about the procedure.
- Do not smoke or drink coffee, tea, or other caffeinated beverages for at least four hours preceding the test.
- Notify your physiologist if you have a pacemaker.
- You can continue all your medication as per normal

## **What happens during an AFT?**

An AFT may be performed on an outpatient basis or as part of your stay in a hospital

1. You will be asked to remove clothing from the waist up. A physiologist will ensure your privacy by covering you with a sheet or gown and exposing only the necessary skin.
2. You will lie on an examination couch for the procedure.
3. The areas where the electrodes patches are placed are cleaned, and in some cases, hair may be shaved or clipped.

4. Electrodes will be attached to your chest, legs and arms
5. The lead wires will be attached to the skin electrodes.
6. The technician will perform three maneuvers with you attached to the ECG leads ( see overleaf).

❖ **Active stand test.**

You will be asked to stand up quickly, while the nurse monitors your heart rate and blood pressure.

❖ **Deep breathing test**

Lying flat on a bed you will be asked to breath in and out slowly, while the nurse monitors your heart rhythm.

❖ **Valsalva Maneuver**

You will be asked to blow into a syringe and continue blowing for 15 seconds, while the nurse monitors your blood pressure and heart rate.

Once the tracing is completed, the physiologist will disconnect the leads and remove the skin electrodes.

**When will I get my results?**

Your consultant will tell you you're results at your next clinic appointment. If you do not have a clinic appointment, you will be sent one after the test. The consultant should also contact your family doctor (GP) with the results

## **Other points to note**

If you are unable to keep your appointment it is very important for you to telephone, even at short notice, so your appointment can be given to someone else on the waiting list.

## **Further Information**

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