# 48-Hour Flat Test

**UC Davis Headache Neurology**

## Purpose

This test helps your clinician determine whether your symptoms have a postural component — that is, whether they improve after prolonged lying flat and return or worsen after you are upright. This pattern can provide useful diagnostic information, but the test by itself does not diagnose a cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) leak or any specific headache disorder.

## Before you begin

Choose a 48-hour period when you can safely remain in bed. Arrange help with meals, medications, children, pets, and other responsibilities if needed. Do not attempt the test if prolonged bed rest would be unsafe for you. Contact your clinician if you are unsure.

## How to perform the test

1. Immediately before lying down, record your symptoms in the BEFORE column on page 2.
2. Remain horizontal for 48 hours, with your head no higher than your hips. When lying on your back, avoid a pillow that raises your head. A pillow may be used while lying on your side if it keeps your head approximately level with your body.
3. Eat and drink while lying down. You may briefly raise your head as needed to swallow safely.
4. Get out of bed only as necessary, such as to use the bathroom, and return to the flat position promptly. Record any substantial time spent upright.
5. After 24 hours flat, while remaining flat, complete the AFTER 24 HOURS FLAT column on page 2.
6. At the end of 48 hours, while still flat and before sitting or standing, complete the AFTER 48 HOURS FLAT column. Then get up and resume ordinary light upright activity. After 3 hours upright, complete the final column. If symptoms become severe and you must lie down before 3 hours, record how long you were upright and your symptoms at that time.

## Important

Try not to change your usual headache medications, caffeine intake, or hydration solely for the test unless your clinician has instructed you otherwise. Record any rescue medication you take. Stop the test if you feel unsafe or develop a new concerning symptom; seek urgent medical attention for symptoms that would ordinarily warrant it.

## What to measure

Rate each symptom from 0 to 10 at that specific moment (0 = absent; 10 = as severe as you can imagine). The comparison between the four time points is more important than any single number.

**Patient name**

**Date started**

**Time test started**

**Time test ended (48 hours)**

# 48-Hour Flat Test — Symptom Record

**UC Davis Headache Neurology**

Enter one number from 0 to 10 in each box.

| SYMPTOM | BEFORE lying flat | AFTER 24 HOURS FLAT | AFTER 48 HOURS FLAT | AFTER 3 HOURS UPRIGHT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Head pain or pressure** | | | | |
| **Neck pain or stiffness** | | | | |
| **Nausea** | | | | |
| **Thinking / concentration / memory difficulty** | | | | |
| **Tinnitus / ear noise** | | | | |
| **Ear pressure / fullness** | | | | |
| **Dizziness / lightheadedness** | | | | |
| **Visual symptoms** | | | | |
| **Fatigue** | | | | |
| **Upper back / interscapular pain** | | | | |

### Overall function / posture

Usual time upright before symptoms become troublesome:

After 48 hours flat: time until symptoms returned/worsened:

If unable to remain upright 3 hours, total time upright:

**Medications or caffeine taken during the test**

**Notes: What improved while flat? What returned or worsened after getting up?**