

# Balance assessment

Information and advice for patients

## Audiology

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### What is a balance assessment?

A balance assessment involves a range of tests performed to investigate the possible cause of imbalance or dizziness.

### What is the benefit of a balance assessment?

A balance assessment can help your consultant to determine whether the balance organs in your ears (the vestibular system) may be contributing towards your imbalance or dizziness.

### Are there any risks to the tests?

It is possible that some of the tests may make you feel dizzy whilst they are being performed. We therefore advise that if possible you are accompanied by an adult for your journey and **avoid driving immediately after the test**. If you do not have anyone to accompany you, please allow additional time to ensure you feel rested and are fully recovered after the tests before driving home. You may feel a little tired after the tests, but most people are able to continue with their normal daily activities.

### Are there any alternatives?

There are no alternative tests that will help your doctor to see if the balance organs in your ears are the cause of your problem. You may have other tests to see if there are other causes for your dizziness or imbalance and your doctor will discuss this with you.

### How does balance work?

We have balance organs in each ear which detect head and body movements. Our bodies combine the messages from these balance organs with the information from our vision and from sensors in our muscles and joints to maintain our balance. If there is a problem with any of these systems, it can result in dizziness and/or imbalance.

## **What will happen at my balance assessment?**

A balance assessment takes about two hours. You will be seen by a Clinical Scientist – a scientist who specialises in the hearing and balance systems. Prior to testing, we will ask you questions about your balance problem/dizziness and your general health.

You will then have some or all of the following tests:

- A hearing test (Pure Tone Audiometry).
- A test to see whether your eardrums are moving normally (Tympanometry).
- Assessment of your stability when standing with eyes open and closed (Clinical Test of Sensory Integration of Balance).
- Assessment of your eye movements when following a target while wearing video goggles (Ocular-Motor tests).
- Assessment for any abnormal eye movements when lying down quickly on the couch (Dix Hallpike test).
- Assessment for any abnormal eye movements when moving or shaking your head (Head impulse test/head shake test).
- Assessment of eye movements when turning on a chair (Rotating chair test).
- Assessment of the balance function in each ear when stimulated with warm and possibly cool water (Caloric test).
- Assessment of the reflex between the balance organs in the ears and the muscles in the neck (Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potentials).

The tests you have will depend on your individual circumstances. We will explain each test in detail during your appointment and will ask for your consent before starting.

## **Preparing for your balance assessment**

- You must not wear any eye make-up as this may affect our tests.
- Please wear contact lenses rather than glasses if possible.
- Do not drink alcohol or take anti-dizziness medication for 48 hours before your appointment. If you are not sure which tablets are for your balance problem, please call us for advice. Continue to take all other medication as advised by your doctor.

## **What happens next?**

The Clinical Scientist will explain the results of the individual tests to you on the day and will write a report back to the consultant that referred you. Your consultant may then write to you or arrange a further appointment to see you again. It is the consultant that is responsible for interpreting the test results in combination with your medical history and deciding on any further management. However, if the Clinical Scientist feels that it is beneficial, they may recommend exercises to help speed your recovery (vestibular rehabilitation).

## Contact details

If you have any questions about your appointment, please telephone the Hearing Services Centre on 0121 507 4875, Monday - Friday, 8.30am - 4.15pm or via Relay App/Textphone (prefix 18001) and ask to speak to an Audiological Scientist or contact us by email on [swb-tr.audiology@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.audiology@nhs.net).

## Further information

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk), follow us on X [@SWBHnhs](https://twitter.com/SWBHnhs) and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](https://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

## Sources used for the information in this leaflet

British Society of Audiology (2010) *Recommended procedure: the caloric test*. Available at: [efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.thebsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Recommended-procedure-for-the-Caloric-test.pdf](https://www.thebsa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Recommended-procedure-for-the-Caloric-test.pdf) [Website accessed 14 January 2025].

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