Vestibular function tests

Information for patients
Your ENT doctor has asked for tests to be carried out on your balance (Vestibular) organs in your inner ear. These tests are often done when a patient has dizziness (vertigo) or unsteadiness.

This leaflet explains what Vertigo is and what will happen during the Vestibular tests.

**What is Vertigo?**

Vertigo is a feeling of movement, even though the head and body are actually still. It usually makes people feel as if they are falling or the room is spinning. In severe cases, it can be quite distressing.

**What causes Vertigo?**

Your sense of balance is controlled by a system that brings together information from the eyes, the movement sensors in the muscles and joints, and the balance (Vestibular) organs in the inner ears. If any part of this system is upset or faulty, the brain is unable to put all the information together and Vertigo may result.

**What is involved in Vestibular Function Testing?**

The Vestibular Function Tests help to determine whether your balance problem originates from the balance organs in the ears.

- The balance system in the ear and brain is evaluated by a range of simple tests, during which your eye movements are observed and recorded. You will be required to wear a pair of lightweight goggles with built in camera to monitor eye movements throughout the test.

- The first tests involve simply viewing the movement of a small white dot in front of you. Recordings are made whilst you are sitting quietly and following the dot with your eyes.

- The effect of opening/closing your eyes or eye movements at various extreme points is measured.

- Finally, the function of the balance organs in the ears is measured by recording your eye movements after a small amount of warm and cool water has been run into each ear canal in turn. This allows us to compare how well the two balance organs are working, and to determine whether your Vertigo may be caused by loss of function in one of the balance organs in the inner ear.
How will the test make me feel?

Immediately after we have put water into your ears, you may feel dizzy or off balance. This is usually mild and only lasts for a short time. As soon as the test has been completed, you may resume your usual medication (so please bring this with you on the day).

How long do the tests take?

The Vestibular Assessment takes approximately 40-50 minutes to complete. This includes taking a brief medical history, as well as performing the required range of tests. You will be given a more detailed explanation of what to do, prior to and during each test.

Is there anything I have to do, to prepare for the tests?

Please adhere to the following information. Failure to do so, may result in the test not being carried out.

- It is important that you **do not eat or drink** for 6 hours, prior to the tests. (If you are Diabetic, please contact the department for advice)

**NB:** If you do eat or drink, we will **NOT** be able to carry out the test.

- Also **No alcohol** or **recreational drugs** to be taken for **48 hours minimum, prior to testing**.

- **You must stop the following medications, 48 hours prior to your appointment** (eg. last dose Friday evening, if your appointment is on a Monday morning):

In particular, these include:

- **Tranquillisers** (E.g. Valium Librium)
- **Pain killers** (E.g. Paracetamol, Ibuprofen, Diclofenac)
- **Sleeping tablets and sedatives** (E.g. Valium, Zopiclone)
- **Anti-Depressants** (E.g. Citalopram)
- **Medications for dizziness and/or sickness**
  E.g. Betahistine (Serc), Prochlorperazine (Stemetil, Stemzine, Buccastem, Compazine, Phenotil), Cinnarizine (Stugeron, Stunerone)

Should you require further clarification or advice, please contact the department on: **01925 662420**.
On your appointment day

- You must ensure **you are accompanied by a responsible adult**, who can wait until the end of the test and then take you home.
- **Do not drive or operate any machinery** for the rest of the day.
- Some people feel they will need to refrain from **work commitments** following the test.
- You can **resume any of your medications** immediately after the test, so please bring this with you.

You should, however, **continue to take any medication that is necessary to your long-term and immediate health**, (E.g. Medication for your heart, blood pressure or blood thinning medications). If you are unsure about your medications, please telephone the department on the number below for further advice.

- **Do not wear any eye makeup** on the day of the test.
- It is advisable to wear **comfortable clothing** for the test.

Please confirm if you are able/unable to attend the appointment, as soon as possible. If not, the appointment can then be given to someone else who needs it.

If you have any further questions regarding these tests, please contact us and ask to speak to one of the Vestibular Team. Please contact us on: **(01925) 662420**

The Vestibular Function Team are:

| Paula Atherton | Head of Department |
| Jill Green     | Senior Audiologist |
| Julie Dutton   | Audiologist |

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**Vestibular function tests – information for patients**

This information is based on local best practice around provision of these tests.

*Our patient information reference pinfo 2012_07_01*  \*Ratified: July 2014. \*Review date: July 2016*

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