



Balance testing

You have been referred for an assessment of your balance, which will last up to 1 hour 15 minutes. You will be seen by two audiologists specialising in hearing and balance.

The information below will give you:

1. A brief overview of how your balance works
2. An outline of what will happen during your assessment.

How is balance controlled?

You use your balance every time you move and when you walk.

Balance is something you are hardly aware of. It's only when it stops working properly, that many of us realise how much we rely on our balance.

You get your sense of balance from three sources:

- Balance organs within your inner ears
- Vision - your eyes give you a picture of the world and where you are in relation to everything.
- Sensors in your joints and muscles

As part of the balance test, we will be looking at the information coming from the balance organs within your inner ears.

The information from your balance organs, vision and sensors in your joints and muscles passes to your brain where it is put together. This allows you to control your eye movements so that your vision is steady, and you move naturally without thinking about it. Normally the information coming from your ears matches the information from the eyes, joint and muscle sensors. However, if there is a problem in the balance organ, vision or joints and muscles then the information sent to the brain is incorrect. This confuses the brain, and it is unable to put the information together correctly and you may feel dizzy or imbalanced.

What to expect at your balance assessment

We will start by asking about your balance problems. Although you will have given your history to a doctor before, it is important to go over it again, so the audiologists get a firsthand account of your balance problems. This will help them decide which tests are necessary.

Tests

All tests will be fully explained before starting and will only be carried out with your consent. You may receive some or all the tests depending on which ones the audiologists feel appropriate to aid diagnosis.

1. **Hearing test** – will be required if you have not taken one in clinic or if you feel your hearing has changed since your last test. This involves you pressing a button every time you hear a tone. A wide range of tones are presented through headphones. The quietest tones you can hear are recorded and from this any hearing loss, its type and nature are determined.
2. **Tests of standing balance** – the audiologist will observe you standing on the floor first, with eyes open then closed. Then standing on a cushion, eyes open then closed.

Information for Patients

The following tests all involve wearing goggles that contain a camera so the audiologists can observe your eye movement.

3. **Dix-Hallpike manoeuvre** – move quickly from upright to flat and back to upright again. This manoeuvre is used to investigate a type of dizziness called Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)
4. **The roll test** – your head is turned rapidly from one side to the other while you are reclined. This manoeuvre is also used to investigate Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)
5. **Video head impulse test** – the head is moved quickly side to side and then upwards and downwards. The test gives the audiologists information about the reflex that exists between the balance system and the eye. In certain problems that can occur in the balance organs, this reflex does not work properly.
6. **Video-nystagmography** – you watch a light as it moves into different positions. The audiologists can find out how well the balance organs are working because there is a link between the eye and balance organ.
7. **Static positional tests** – your head and body are moved into different positions. These include lying flat, inclined, onto the right side and onto the left side.

Results

The audiologists will look at all the results and discuss them with you and the possible cause of your balance difficulties and discuss possible treatments.

Important information

Before your appointment date:

48 hours before your appointment:

- Stop taking any medication prescribed to control your dizziness. Continue to take as normal any other medication prescribed for other medical conditions.
- Do not consume any alcohol or recreational drugs.

On the appointment day:

- Do not apply any make-up this includes eyeliner, mascara and eye shadow.
- Contact lenses will need to be taken out before the balance assessment. Please bring cleaning fluid/new lenses/glasses
- Please wear comfortable trousers or leggings as we will need to move you into different positions during the assessment.
- You are welcome to bring a friend or relative to this appointment.

After the appointment:

- You may now take your medication prescribed to control your balance symptoms.
- For a couple of hours after the assessment you may feel unsteady, but after this period you should be able to continue with your normal routine.

Information for Patients

Communication needs

If you require an interpreter at your appointment, please telephone **0121 371 4756** or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.

Students

Please note that as this is a teaching hospital, a student may carry out some or all of your appointment under supervision of a qualified audiologist. If you do not wish to have a student present during your appointment, please let reception know on your arrival.

Patient transport

If you are eligible for patient transport, please contact West Midlands Ambulance non-emergency Patient Transport Service on **0800 035 6511**. Please note that transport is only available for Monday to Friday appointments.

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

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Audiology

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk