



Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) Information for patients

Benign: this means that the cause of dizziness is not a threat to your health.

Paroxysmal: refers to the fact that the dizziness comes in short bursts.

Positional: refers to the fact that the dizziness only comes on when you are in certain positions.

Vertigo: is the medical name for the spinning sensation felt.

You have been referred for an assessment and if necessary treatment of BPPV. The appointment will last up to 45 minutes, and you will be seen by two audiologists specialising in hearing and balance.

The information below will give you:

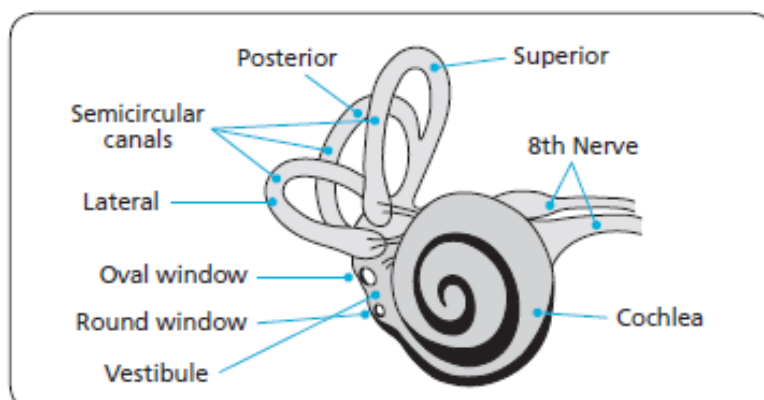
- A brief overview of BPPV
- An outline of what will happen during your assessment
- Some important information you need to know

What is BPPV?

BPPV is a common cause of dizziness arising from the balance organs within the inner ear. It happens in people of all ages but is most common in the elderly. The symptoms are intense short bursts of dizziness sometimes associated with feeling sick. The dizziness almost always comes following a head movement, this maybe after turning in bed, bending down or looking up into a cupboard for example. Sometimes people continue to feel sick and unsteady for hours after the burst of dizziness has stopped.

What causes it?

It is thought to be caused by tiny crystal particles known as otoconia which have become unstuck from their normal place in the balance organ and moved into one of the semi circular canals. Each ear has three semi circular canals and their job is to detect which direction your head is moving in. Once inside one of the three canals, the tiny crystal particles then move around in the canal. This makes the brain think that you are moving when in fact you are not.



The crystals can become unstuck from their normal place as a result of head injury or an infection affecting the inner ear, but most often it occurs for no known reason. Although it is possible to occur in both ears at the same time it is generally seen in only one ear.

What to expect at your balance assessment

We will start by asking some questions 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 first hand account of your balance problems. This will help them decide which tests are necessary.

How we diagnose BPPV

To diagnose BPPV we need to see it happening. When it is happening and you feel dizzy your eyes will move in a particular way. The direction of eye movement tells us which of the three semicircular canals the tiny crystal particles have moved into. How long the dizziness lasts tells us whether the crystals are floating freely or whether they have become attached.

Two common manoeuvres are performed to allow us to see where the tiny crystal particles have gone:

1. **Dix-Hallpike manoeuvre** – this involves moving quickly from sitting to lying down and back to sitting again. The audiologists will support you while you are moving and will look at your eyes when you have laid down and when you return to sitting.
2. **The roll test** – this involves turning your head rapidly from one side to the other whilst reclined on a bed. The audiologists will look at your eyes when you have turned your head.
3. **Other movements** – this can be any movement that you know will make the dizziness come on.

Sometimes we need to look at your eyes through goggles that hold cameras. The goggles allow us to see your eye movement more easily. For people with very poor mobility, we have the option of diagnosing BPPV in a specialised chair.

How we treat BPPV

BPPV will often clear up on its own within a few months, so some people choose to wait and see. For some people BPPV does not clear up by itself and the tiny crystal particles have to be gently moved out of the semicircular canal and back to their normal place. When we know which of the semicircular canals the tiny crystal particles have moved into, we can gently take you through a series of head and body movements that float the tiny crystal particles out of the semicircular canal. The gentle movements take about five minutes in total. For people with very poor mobility, we have the option of treating BPPV in a specialised chair.

After treatment

It is possible that following treatment you may feel light headed or slightly unwell. This will gradually get better over a couple of days. After this, if the treatment has been successful you will now be able to make those movements that caused the dizziness without any problems.

Some people need more than one treatment to move the tiny crystal particles. We will therefore telephone you, 2 weeks after your treatment, to check whether it has been successful and to arrange another appointment if needed.

Information for Patients

What if the dizziness comes back?

In a small number of people, the BPPV can come back. We offer a six-month open access to our service. Should symptoms return within that timeframe then please contact us directly. After the six months, we ask that you contact the GP in case anything else has altered in your medical history.

Contact details

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Audiology Centre

Ground Floor, Nuffield House
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston
Birmingham, B15 2TH

Telephone: 0121 371 7100

Email: Audiology@uhb.nhs.uk and address your email: **For the attention of the Balance Audiologists**

Important information

Before your appointment date:

- For your safety we do not recommend that you drive for at least 2 hours after the assessment. If possible, please arrange for someone to accompany you home.
- You are welcome to bring a friend or relative to this appointment.

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.

After the appointment:

- You may now take your medication prescribed to control your balance symptoms.

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.

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