

Vestibular function testing



Information for patients

Regional Department of Neurotology



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SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



You have been referred for vestibular (balance) function testing to investigate the cause of your dizziness, vertigo or imbalance. This leaflet explains what the tests will involve and what you need to do before attending your appointment.

About dizziness and imbalance

Your sense of balance is controlled by the brain which brings together information from three sources: your eyes, the movement sensors in your joints and the vestibular (balance) organs in your inner ears. If there is a change in the function of any of the three systems you may experience dizziness, vertigo or imbalance. This may include feelings of unsteadiness or light-headedness and sensations of spinning, falling or moving. Even if the change in function was only temporary, you may still feel on-going symptoms of unsteadiness, light headedness or disorientation.

What is involved in vestibular function testing?

The vestibular function testing appointment will last up to 90 minutes and will begin with asking you some questions about your dizziness or balance problems. A range of balance function tests will then be performed to determine whether your dizziness originates from the balance organs in the inner ears. For most of these tests you will be asked to wear a pair of goggles with a camera attached to observe and record your eye movements. This is because there is a reflex linking your eye movements with the balance organs in the inner ears.

The tests we carry out will depend upon your symptoms and may include some or all of the following:

- Measuring your standing ability on a solid surface and an unsteady surface with your eyes open or closed.
- Recording your eye movements whilst you view the motion of a small square on a screen in front of you, in light and dark conditions.
- Recording your eye movements with your head or body in different positions.
- Recording your eye movements after a small amount of warm or cool water has been run into each ear canal in turn. In some instances air may be used instead of water.
- Recording your eye movements during small, fast head movements.
- Recording your eye movements whilst you sit in a chair which moves slowly from side to side or slowly around in a circle.
- Placing some sticky pads on your neck and head, and headphones over your ears to record the balance organs' response to loud sounds.

How will I feel?

Some of the tests may make you feel dizzy or off-balance. However you should soon feel back to normal again; these tests should not trigger off further attacks of dizziness.

Important information – please read carefully:

Before your appointment:

- Your ears need to be free of wax. Your own GP surgery can usually check your ears and remove any excessive wax. Please arrange this with your GP surgery.

48 hours before your appointment:

- Stop taking any medications prescribed specifically for your dizziness, as these can affect your test results. Continue to take as normal any other medications you have been prescribed for other medical conditions. You can resume taking any dizziness medications after your vestibular function testing appointment.
- Do not consume any alcohol or recreational drugs.

On the day of your appointment:

- Do not wear any eye make-up, including mascara, eyeliner and eye-shadow, as this can interfere with our eye movement recording equipment.
- Try to keep hair products (e.g. hairspray, hair gel) to a minimum, as this can interfere with the goggles you will need to wear.
- You may prefer to wear trousers on the day of the appointment, as you may be asked to lie down on a couch during the tests.
- Travel arrangements – it is advisable not to drive immediately after your test. If possible, arrange an alternative driver, or if you are using public transport come accompanied.

Please be aware that failure to comply with any of the above requirements may mean that we have to postpone your appointment, which could lead to delays in your treatment.

Contact details

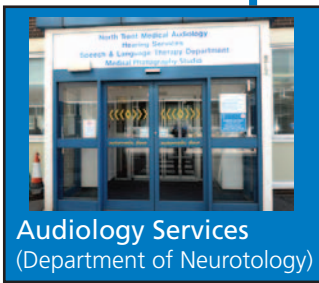
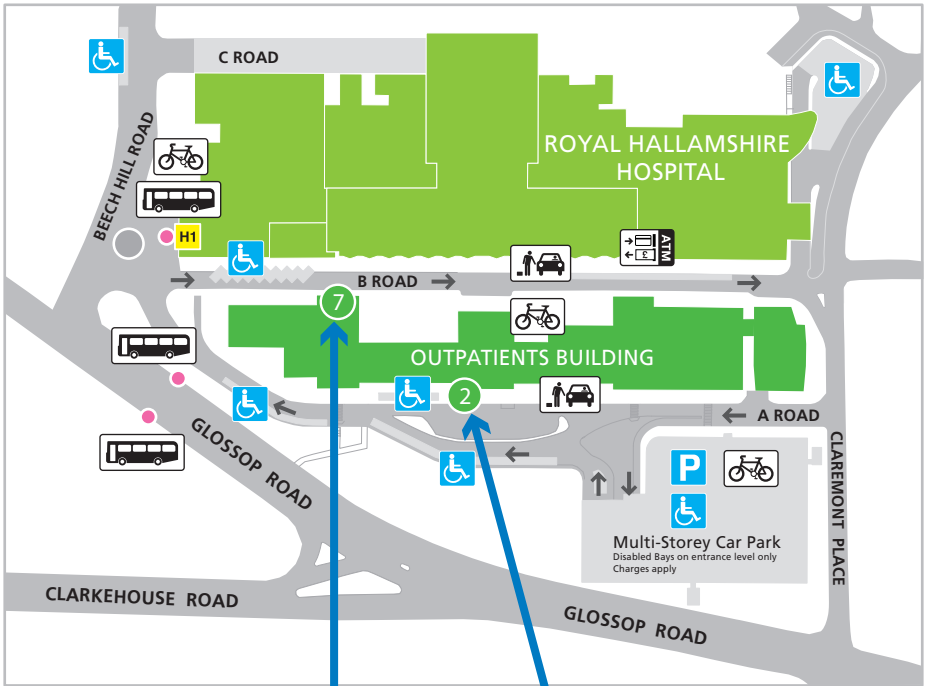
If you have any questions about these tests, please contact us and ask to speak to a member of the vestibular team:

- Telephone: **0114 226 1314**
- Text: **0791 772 1604**
- Email: **STH.ContactRDN@nhs.net**

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How to find us

The entrance to the department is on 'B' road, entrance number 7



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Hospital shuttle bus



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