



Your doctor has asked for tests to be carried out on your/ your child's balance system, which includes the vestibular (balance) organs in the inner ear.

These tests are sometimes done when a patient has

dizziness (vertigo), unsteadiness or poor balance.

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 joints, and the balance organs in the inner ears. If any part of this system is faulty or upset, the brain is unable to put all the information together and vertigo may be the result.

Where does the vestibular function testing take place?

The tests are done in the Hearing Services department at Sheffield Children's Hospital where there is a room with the special equipment we need for the tests.

Who will do the testing?

The tests are done by experienced and friendly Healthcare Scientists in Hearing Services at Sheffield Children's Hospital.

What is involved in vestibular function testing?

- The tests help to find whether your balance problem comes from the organs in your ears.
- We look at the balance system in the ear and brain using some simple tests, during which special goggles are worn which allow us to watch and record your eye movements.

- The tests we do will depend on the age and cooperation level of your child. Tests may involve simply watching the movement of a small light on a screen in front of you or wearing a pair of goggles whilst we move the head.
- We will sit you on a special chair which rotates so we can check your eye movements in response to movement.
- The function of the balance organs in the ears can be measured by recording your eye movements after a small amount of warm or cool water has been run into each ear in turn. This allows us to compare how well the two balance organs are working and to understand whether dizziness may be caused by one of the balance organs not working as well as the other.

How will I feel during testing?

Immediately after we have put water into your ears, there may be a slight dizzy or off-balance feeling. This is usually mild and doesn't last long. The test will not trigger further attacks of dizziness.

How long will the tests take?

The assessment usually takes about an hour, but you may need to allow an hour and a half so that we can ask you about aspects of your balance problem, complete testing and discuss the results afterwards. Our experienced and friendly staff will explain clearly what you need to do before each test, and will answer any questions that you have.

Please confirm whether you are going to be able to attend the appointment or not. If you are unable to attend your appointment, please let us know as soon as possible, so that the appointment can then be given to someone else who needs it.

If you would like to ask any more questions about the tests or let us know if you or your child have any specific needs, please phone us.

Information Leaflet number:

Author/Contact:

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Samantha Lear

Sheffield Children's 
NHS Foundation Trust

If you have any further questions about these tests, please call us at:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Hearing Services
Sheffield Children's NHS Foundation Trust
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(0114) 2717453

And ask to speak to: Samantha Lear
Lead Clinical Scientist (Audiology)

Vestibular and balance function tests



For further advice contact:

Main hospital number: 0114 271 7000

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Our young patients are at the centre of everything we do and all our work is focused on providing them with the best facilities, equipment and experience possible, helping to provide a world-class facility that is positioned at the very forefront of paediatric care.



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