

## VESTIBULAR / BALANCE TESTING - PATIENT GUIDE

You have been referred to the Balance Centre at the Wellington Hospital for special tests to investigate your balance system.

### **Why have I been referred for vestibular / balance testing?**

We use information from our eyes, our feet and the balance organs in our ears, the vestibular system, to help us keep our balance. The vestibular / balance tests will help the doctor to determine which parts of your balance system may be causing your symptoms and help to determine the best course of treatment for you.

### **What can I expect during a balance function test?**

The tests are completely painless but some of them may make you feel a little unsteady, dizzy or occasionally slightly nauseous for a few minutes. This does not happen to everybody and most patients do not have any symptoms at all during testing. The typical balance study lasts from 1½ to 2½ hours.

To begin with you will be asked some questions about your symptoms and any other relevant medical history. You will start with a hearing test followed by a visual examination of your ears. You will be asked to wear special goggles, which are linked to a computer. This will allow the audiologist to carefully monitor your eye movements during the test and this will provide us with information about your balance system and how it is functioning.



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The **visual tests** involve lights moving across a display screen in a darkened room and you will be required to follow the lights with your eyes.



During the **caloric test** a small probe is placed at the entrance to your ear. Through this probe, warm and cool air is introduced into your ear canal which stimulates a response from your balance system. We can test this response by monitoring your eye movements.

Although these are the primary tests, in some cases other tests may be indicated. The audiologist will explain everything clearly to you before each test.

### How should I prepare for the balance tests?

1. Do not take the following medications for 24 hours before your test: Tranquilizers, sleeping pills, drugs for dizziness or drugs for allergies.

If you are taking drugs for diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, seizures, anxiety or depression, **continue to take them as usual.**

If you have been taking Valium, Xanax, or Klonopin for longer than 8 weeks, **continue to take them as usual.**

If you are in any doubt about the medicines you are taking please discuss with your doctor.

2. Do not drink any alcohol for 24 hours before testing.
3. Do not smoke, or drink caffeine (coffee, tea, or cola) for 2 hours before your test.
4. Try not to eat for 3 hours before testing. If you are not able to do this please ensure that you eat a light meal only. **If you are diabetic please eat as usual.**
5. Do not wear contact lenses.
6. Do not wear makeup (including mascara).
7. You may feel more comfortable bringing someone with you, to drive you home if you feel dizzy after testing.
8. Please bring a list of all the prescription medications you take.
9. Please bring your hearing test results with you, unless you are scheduled to have or have previously had tests at the hospital.

**Please note:** The above instructions apply to balance function testing ONLY. If you are only having a physiotherapy or doctors appointment these restrictions do not apply. For physiotherapy **posturography** assessments, please wear trousers.

### What happens after the test?

After the tests are completed, the results will be analyzed and the final report will be sent to your doctor who will then advise you as to the next step.

Please contact the Balance Centre if you have any other queries or concerns on 0207 483 5186.