

PATIENT INFORMATION

Attending the Vertigo Clinic

You have been referred to the vertigo clinic due to your problems with dizziness/balance.

How long will the appointment last?

The appointment will last approximately **1 hour**

What will happen at the appointment?

- When you arrive in the department you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire about your symptoms.
- You will then be seen by a Specialist Audiologist or Physiotherapist who will discuss the problems you have been experiencing with balance/dizziness and enquire about associated symptoms.
- You will then be examined and given some basic balance tests. This will involve looking at your eye movements, your coordination and your ability to balance in various situations.

Information about the Balance System and common disorders.

The Balance System

- We rely on 3 systems for balance:
 1. The balance organs in the inner ears (the semi-circular canals)
 2. Vision
 3. Sensors in the muscles and joints throughout the body.
- When any part of the system is not working correctly it can result in dizziness and/or imbalance.
- Dizziness itself can vary from a sensation of light headedness, to a feeling of spinning which is called vertigo- nothing to do with a fear of heights.
- There are few specific tests available, so diagnosis is largely based on your symptoms and how they behave.
- Disorders of the inner ear usually give the most intense symptoms of vertigo. At its most severe it can be associated with nausea, vomiting and sweating. Many people are frightened by these sensations thinking they might be having a stroke or that they have a brain tumour.
- The good news is that often a simple viral infection of the inner ear has caused the problem. This is known as vestibular neuritis.

Vestibular Neuritis

- It is thought that the virus affects how the inner ear works by causing inflammation around the vestibular nerve. The fine balance between the left and right ears is upset which confuses the brain, and the result is intense, persistent vertigo
- Over time the brain learns to compensate for the change, and the vertigo will gradually improve. In order for this to happen the brain has to experience movement and dizziness.
- As soon as you can, you should try to move around. This can be difficult, because the natural reaction is to avoid the movements which make you feel dizzy. You could turn your head side to side slowly 2-3 times, or move it up and down. Move your eyes with your head, to focus on different objects. Gradually increase the speed and amount of movement.
- Medication is useful in the first few days, but will hinder recovery if taken for longer.

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)

- Another common cause of vertigo is this condition in which tiny crystals become loose and move around in the fluid within the semi-circular canals.
- To see if you have this condition we will perform a test called the Dix Hallpike Test
- To complete this test, you will need to be able to lie flat so let us know at your appointment if this is a problem for you
- You will be laid down on a couch with your head to one side and we will examine your eye movements.
- If loose crystals are present we will observe your eyes moving and you will feel dizzy for a few seconds.
- If we are able to identify any loose crystals we may perform a repositioning manoeuvre (Epley manoeuvre) by moving you around on the couch, this will put the crystals back into the right place and will hopefully resolve the vertigo.
- If the Dix Hallpike test does not produce any symptoms it is likely that the problem with your balance is caused by something else.
- We will attempt to determine if there is a weakness in one of your ears and if so we may give you a tailored set of balance exercises to work
- When all the tests are completed the results will be explained to you, any questions you have will be answered and a plan of management discussed.

These are only two of the many conditions that can affect the balance system. Other less common causes are Labyrinthitis, Meniere's disease, migraine, head injury, whiplash injury and neurological problems.

Additional information

Please feel free to bring a family member or a friend to the appointment with you, and we recommend that you do not drive yourself home after the appointment as some of the tests may leave you feeling unbalanced for a short while afterwards.

Please let us know before your appointment if you need an interpreter or any special assistance. If you do need interpretation we would advise you to use one of our interpreters rather than a family member or friend.

If you have problems reading small print please let us know at your appointment.

If you have any questions about your appointment you can contact the Audiology Department by phone or email.

Telephone: ☐ (01803) 656325
Email: audiology.sdhct@nhs.net

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.