

Your balance assessment

Audiology Department

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Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

Who will I see for my balance appointment and how long will my appointment take?

You will see an audiologist specialising in balance assessment rehabilitation. We offer modern evidenced-based approaches for patients and use a variety of techniques designed to investigate and improve these conditions.

The appointment will last **up to 90 minutes**.

Some of the tests that will be taken during this appointment are designed to make patients feel off-balance. For this reason **we recommend that patients arrange to be collected after the appointment for their own safety or to bring someone with you to this appointment.**

If you are taking any medication for your balance, we ask that this is stopped 48 hours before the assessment. Please ring the department if you have any queries about your medications and the test. We also ask you refrain from excessive alcohol consumption 24 hours prior to testing.

Please contact the department if you require any specific communication support, mobility aid or other relevant assistance for this appointment. You are welcome to attend with a partner, carer or significant other. Our reception hours are 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

What can I expect from my balance appointment?

If you have any questions during the appointment, please ask at any point.

It is vital that your ears are clear of wax before this appointment. Advice on how to do this is included in your appointment letter.

The audiologist will perform a detailed assessment of your balance system. This involves a variety of tests which are selected depending on your symptoms. The audiologist will ask you some questions relating to your medical history to check that you are suitable for the assessment to take place. These may include, but not limited to:

- Have you ever had any problems with your ears, such as perforations or ear infections?
- Do you have any medical problems with your eyes?
- Do you have any back or neck problems, or any problems lying completely flat?
- What medication do you regularly take?
- Have you had any alcohol in the last 48 hours?
- Have you had any balance medication in the last 48 hours?

What do the tests involve?

One test involves recording eye movements whilst tracking a moving target with wireless goggles on. **We will ask for any eye make-up to be removed prior to the goggles being fitted.**

The eye movements are interpreted using computer software and this gives the audiologist an indication if there are specific problems with the balance system.

The second test involves the use of a rotating chair to stimulate the balance organs in the ear. The chair will rotate at a steady speed for around 60 seconds or so and then stop. This will then be repeated after a short break with the chair rotating in the opposite direction. This is the part of the assessment that is likely to make you dizzy. This test is designed to compare the balance organ in each ear, to check that they are working symmetrically.

We will also perform a balance test that involves controlled quick movements of your head in different directions. This is done by the specialist audiologist and only if you have no neck pain or restricted movement.

For some conditions, a balance test may be performed that involves standing on a platform and being asked to perform different tasks, such as standing with your eyes closed, measuring your ability to change weight from one foot to another, amongst other tasks. Again if this test is required, it will be explained in full during the appointment.

The audiologist will explain the test procedure for each applicable test in full at the appointment, but if you have any concerns before the appointment, please contact the department.

If further tests are needed for the identification of your particular balance problem, this will be explained to you and the appropriate appointment arranged. This can involve a referral to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) consultant or the Complex Care Team. The audiologist will explain the reasoning behind this in detail and what this will involve.

Do I receive any follow up care?

A further review appointment or telephone follow-up, usually at four to six weeks, will be made depending on the progress of your symptoms. Further referrals may be made to an ENT consultant or the Complex Care Team, again this is on a case-by-case basis which your audiologist will discuss with you.

What will happen to the results of my appointment?

All of the results obtained from this assessment will be discussed with you at the end of the appointment. A report containing these results will be sent to your GP. You will automatically receive a copy of this report, unless you decline. If you require an onward referral to the ENT Department who might request further tests, a letter will be sent to them explaining the reason for the referral. This report will also be stored on the audiology database.

How to contact us?

If you have any queries about your appointment or problems as a result of the test/procedure or about your hearing aid(s), then you can contact the Audiology Department between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday or by email.

If you are unable to attend or have questions then please contact us immediately.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.
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