

## ***Why were you screened for signs of a balance problems?***

First, don't be alarmed because your balance score was abnormal. All patients have problems with balance at some point in their lives. Balance problems can be caused by such common things as a bad cold or the flu, a lack of sleep, the effects of over-the-counter or prescription medications or even something as simple as too much caffeine or alcohol. In such cases the problem will resolve itself without medical intervention.

But balance problems and dizziness can also be the first sign of other health problems, such as anemia, degenerative neurological disorders, diabetes, hypertension, hypotension, infections, peripheral vascular and cerebrovascular diseases, traumatic injuries and many, many others. So identifying patients with abnormal balance ability or dizziness can be invaluable in the detection of other serious, although apparently unrelated, conditions.

There's also another reason. The simple balance screening test you were given helps your physician identify patients who may be at an increased risk of falling, and falls can often have disastrous results, particularly for older patients. Falls can result in broken hips and other fractures, as well as head trauma and other serious injuries. Falls can even cause death.

So when a patient shows signs of a balance disorder and the reason is not immediately apparent (as in your case) it's important to find out why. But please keep in mind that balance disorders are almost always caused by some benign, easily treatable condition.

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provide this brochure  
as a service to patients  
and their families**

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**This brochure is not meant to provide you with  
medical advice. Only a licensed physician is qualified  
to provide you with medical advice.**

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*It may be fun  
to spin around and fall  
when you're very young*

*But falls can have  
serious consequences  
for adults*

**As part of your visit, you were  
given a simple balance test.**

**Your results were abnormal  
for a person of your age.  
Now we need to find out why.**



**HELPING PEOPLE REGAIN THEIR BALANCE ... FOR LIFE®**

### *What happens next?*

Just as in the diagnosis of any other medical condition, it is important that balance patients like you receive certain recognized tests and evaluations to help your physician determine (diagnose) what is causing your problem.

Because the human balance system is so complex, the medical community recommends a “multi-disciplinary approach” to the diagnosis of dizziness and balance disorders. A multi-disciplinary approach means that a team of medical professionals with different clinical expertise works together to find out what is causing your balance problem. Your “starting team” will probably have three members: your physician, an audiologist and a physical therapist.

### *The physical evaluation*

Your physician will refer you to a physical therapist for a physical evaluation that will include checking your reflexes, sensation, muscle strength and tone, coordination, gait and stance, etc.

In many instances, particularly in elderly patients, balance problems are caused by lower extremity muscle weakness. Additional contributing factors might be poor muscle coordination or other physical problems that the physical therapist is especially qualified to identify.

### *The audiological evaluation*

Because balance disorders are often the result of a problem with the vestibular system, which is located in the inner ear, and because a condition that involves your ears may cause hearing loss and also damage to your vestibular system, your physician will order an audiometric examination by a qualified audiologist.

The audiologist will do a hearing test to check your ability to hear certain sounds, testing your hearing at low, mid-range and high frequencies. He or she will also check the status of your middle ear system, and your ear’s ability to respond to sound at different levels.

The audiologist will also look for signs of nystagmus, a rapid, jerky movement of the eyes that may indicate the presence of a balance disorder.

The audiologist will also obtain your comprehensive medical history, using a special software called HistoTRAK™ that has been specially designed to secure the information relevant to an accurate diagnosis in cases of dizziness and balance disorders.

### *Then what?*

After you have been seen by the physical therapist and the audiologist and they have provided your physician with the results of their evaluation, you will be seen by your physician for a “problem-focused” visit.

### *The problem focused visit*

Just as the name implies, at your problem focused visit, your physician will focus on the possible reason for your balance problem. The results of your audiological evaluation, the results of your physical evaluation and the information revealed by your problem-focused history will all be carefully considered.

Your physician may also do an additional physical examination and ask you additional questions about your balance problem and its symptoms.

Your physician may then order additional tests such as a VNG (a painless test involving the use of infrared video cameras) or may refer you to a specialist (ENT, neurologist, cardiologist, etc.).

He or she might also decide to treat the problem medically, such as with patients who are found to have dizziness caused by high blood pressure, or might decide to refer you for physical therapy at this point.

If additional tests are ordered, or if you are referred to a specialist, you will then need to be seen by your physician for another problem focused visit so that he/she can make a diagnosis and decide on the proper treatment plan.

If you receive therapy, as most balance patients do, you will probably be seen by your physician at least once more to review your progress.