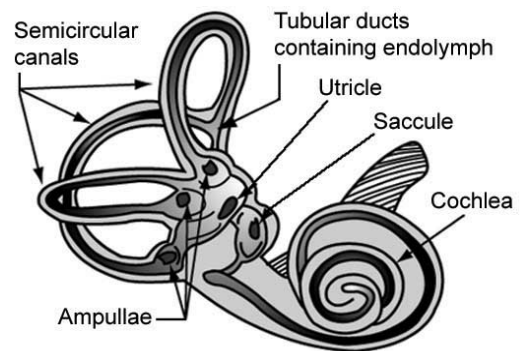


The Caloric test

This leaflet is for patients with symptoms of dizziness who are about to undergo Caloric testing. It is one of the tests we can use to evaluate the function of the ears and their contribution to your balance. The tests we choose to evaluate your dizziness will depend on your individual symptoms. This leaflet covers what you can expect during the test.

What is the purpose of the Caloric test?

Some types of dizziness and balance problems can originate in the inner ear or the structures (nerves) attached to the ear, called the ‘vestibular system’. Each of our tests explores this system in a different way. The inner ear on each side of your head has three structures, called the semi-circular canals. These sense movement of the head to help keep your vision stable. The Caloric test measures the function of the semi-circular canals (and the upper portion of the balance nerve), which are responsible for measuring horizontal (side to side) head movements. It may not tell us the exact cause of your dizziness but the test can help locate whether your dizziness is coming from these structures. This can help narrow down the possible causes of your symptoms.



What you can expect during the test

If you are sent these instructions, we may consider using this test at your appointment. These instructions explain the procedure to help reduce the time it takes to perform and to answer more common questions, in advance of your appointment.

- During the test we will measure your eye-movement, using video goggles. The front cover of the goggles will be closed and this testing will take place in the dark. **Please do not wear make-up, particularly eye make-up.**
- You will be required to lie down on a couch while we perform the test.
- The test involves trickling warm water into your ears, first in one ear and then in the other ear, with a short interval of a few minutes between each measurement. In some cases, we may need to conduct a second set of irrigations using cool water for the result to be clear. We can also perform the test using air rather than water. This can be loud.
- In total we usually undertake 2 or 4 irrigations which can take 20 – 40 minutes in total.

What you may experience

It is common for people to experience a turning sensation (vertigo). In some people this can result in nausea and, in a small number of cases, vomiting. These symptoms will usually pass after a brief period. It is uncommon but some patients can feel anxious with the testing.

You may experience a little discomfort to the ears; and where air is used as in irrigation technique this can be loud.

It is unlikely that the testing will cause any worsening of your underlying symptoms but the test may interact with migraine. The test can cause some imbalance (unsteadiness), following completion. This is usually brief but in rare cases, can last a little longer.

Are there precautions or potential risks from performing the Caloric test?

The Caloric test is a safe test when performed with the correct checks. As a precaution, we do not perform the test on patients with underlying, unstable heart conditions, high and/or poorly-controlled blood pressure, recent stroke, epilepsy, acute mental health disorder, recent ear surgery (within 6 months) or eye surgery (within 3 months). You should discuss this with your clinician before coming to your appointment or before undergoing the test, if you have any concerns in this regard.

There is a risk of perforating (making a hole in) the eardrum; this is thought unlikely but more of a risk where there is previous weakness to the eardrum. The version of the test using water should not be performed if you have a perforation in the eardrum. We perform checks beforehand to rule this out. It also may not be appropriate to carry out the testing where there is an outer or middle ear infection and after some types of previous surgery (such as mastoid cavity) but this will be decided on a case-by-case basis and should be discussed with your clinician if you have any concerns.

As the version of the test using air is loud, it may make any tinnitus worse in a small number of cases. If you have tinnitus or hypersensitivity to sound, it may not be appropriate to carry out this version of the test in all cases. If you have any concerns, you should discuss this with your clinician in advance.

Preparation for the test

- **Please do not wear make-up, particularly eye make-up.** It can affect the reliability of the test and may result in us having to cancel the test.
- You should avoid large meals before the test.
- We advise you do not drive on the day of testing and arrange for someone to bring you to and collect you from the appointment. If you do drive, make sure there is someone to collect you and your vehicle in the event you do not feel fit to drive afterwards.
- You should stop taking the following for 48 hours before the test:
 - Drugs that suppress the function of the balance system in ear (including prochlorperazine (stemetil, buccastem), cinnarazine, cyclizine;
 - Alcohol and recreational drugs;
 - If you have taken any of the above within 48 hours or you do not feel able to stop them, **please tell your clinician** so that they can take this into account when understanding your results.
- Other drugs which may influence the testing include drugs that have an anticholinergic action (common examples: tricyclic anti-depressant) and sedative drugs from the benzodiazepine family. You should discuss with your GP whether it is appropriate to stop

them before the test; but if you are taking these drugs, **please inform your Audiology clinician** so that they can take this into account when understanding your results.

- If you have any concerns or questions about which medicines to stop taking for the test, please discuss it with your clinician before the day of the test.

Can I decide not to have the Caloric test carried out?

If you do not want to go ahead with the test or have any concerns about it, contact your clinician **before you attend the clinic**.

Contacting us

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To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Audiology Department, August 2022.

Next review due: August 2024