

Balance Disorders

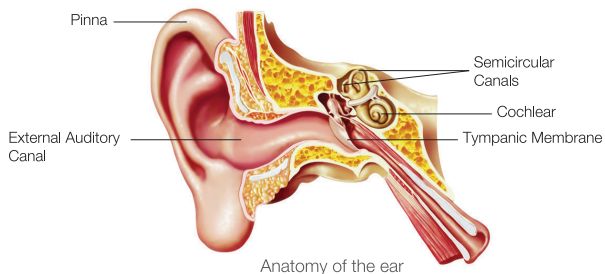


A multi-disciplinary team comprising Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) – Head & Neck Surgery doctors, a neurologist, audiologist, rehabilitation therapist and other specialists work together to care for patients by providing useful diagnostic information, treatments, counselling and advice.

What is a balance disorder?

This is a condition that makes you feel unsteady or dizzy. You feel as if you are moving, spinning, or floating. This happens even when you are standing still or lying down. Balance disorders are caused by certain health conditions, medication, or a problem with the inner ear or brain.

Our sense of balance is controlled by a maze-like structure in our inner ear called the labyrinth. The labyrinth is made of bone and soft tissue. At one end are the semi-circular canals and the otolithic organs, which are responsible for balance. At the other end is the cochlear, which enables us to hear. The medical term for all parts of the inner ear involved with balance is the vestibular system.



What causes balance disorders?

A wide range of conditions and diseases can cause balance problems, including:

- **Anxiety disorders**

Stress or anxiety may play a role in causing dizziness, or more commonly, be a contributing factor in dizziness from other causes, such as inner ear disease.

- **Brain disorders**

Migraine and very rarely, tumours.

- **Inner ear problems**

Disorders of the inner ear account for about half of all cases of persistent (ongoing) dizziness. Disorders include Meniere's disease, benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) and vestibular neuritis.

- **Other conditions**

Underlying medical conditions such as low blood pressure, infection, some heart problems (e.g. as cardiac arrhythmias) and hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). Medication for epilepsy, coronary heart disease and high blood pressure can also cause dizziness in some people.

- **Unknown causes**

In such cases, appropriate treatment can help to alleviate symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

You may stagger when you try to walk, move unsteadily or fall when you try to stand up. Some of the symptoms include:

- Blurred vision
- Confusion or disorientation
- Dizziness or vertigo (a spinning sensation)
- Falling or feeling as if you are going to fall
- Light-headedness, faintness, or a floating sensation

Other symptoms include nausea and vomiting, diarrhoea, changes in heart rate and blood pressure, fear, anxiety, or panic. Some people also feel tired, depressed or cannot concentrate due to the symptoms. These symptoms may come and go or last for longer periods of time.

How is a diagnosis made?

To diagnose a balance disorder, an Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) – Head & Neck Surgery doctor will review your medical history and symptoms. He/she will conduct a physical and neurological examination on you followed by a comprehensive range of tests which may include hearing tests, vestibular (balance) assessments using videonystagmography (VNG) and imaging tests. VNG uses advanced technology to test your central motor functions related to the balance system. In this test, you will use a pair of goggles over your eyes. These goggles are fitted with special cameras that measure involuntary eye movements, called nystagmus. The entire session is video recorded for detailed analysis. The VNG assessment consists of a series of tests involving visual stimulations, positional changes and flushing of both ears with water or an air stimulus.

What are the treatment options?

It is important to note that treatment will depend on the cause of your balance disorder. You will receive an individualised treatment plan which may include medication and one or more of the following:

- **Diet and lifestyle**

Get sufficient exercise and rest, and reduce your intake of specific food that cause symptoms.

- **Fall prevention**

Home-safety and assistive devices to reduce your risk of falls.

- **Positioning manoeuvres**

Manoeuvring the position of the head to clear particles in the inner ear.

- **Surgery**

Removing tumours in consultation with an ENT specialist and a neurosurgeon.

- **Vestibular rehabilitation**

Balance-retraining exercises.



For more information

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital and Jurong Community Hospital

1 Jurong East St 21, Singapore 609606

www.ntfgh.com.sg | www.jch.com.sg

Clinic opening hours

Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 5.30pm

Saturday: 8.30am – 12.30pm (Selected clinics only*)

Dental Clinic: Monday – Thursday: 8.00am – 5.30pm, Friday: 8.00am – 5.00pm

*Please refer to our websites for more details.

General enquiries & appointments

General enquiries line: 6908 2222 (24-hr)

Fax: 6716 5500 | Email: contactus@nuhs.edu.sg

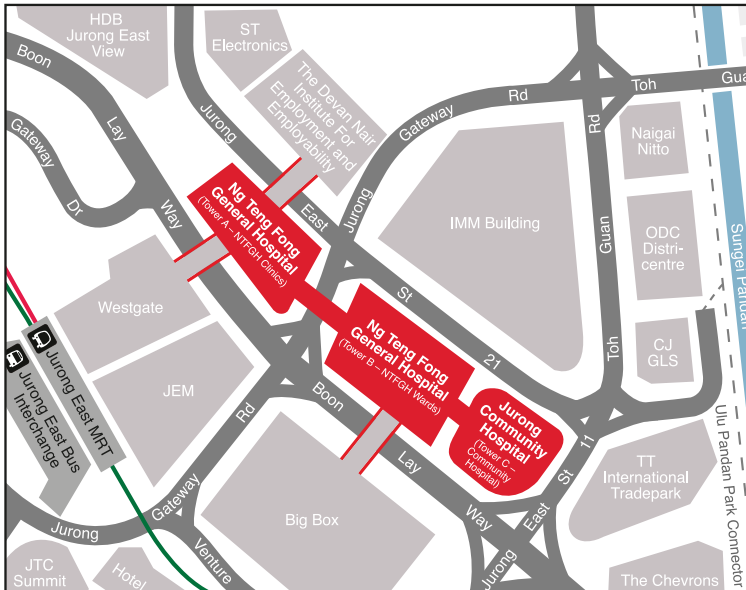
Appointment line: 6908 2222 (Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.30pm, Saturday: 8.00am – 12.30pm)

Fax: 6716 2200 | Email: appointment@nuhs.edu.sg

Dental appointment line: 6716 2233 (Monday – Friday: 8.00am – 5.30pm)

Fax: 6716 2200 | Email: JHCampus_Dental@nuhs.edu.sg

Getting there



By train

Alight at Jurong East MRT Station

By bus

Jurong East Bus Interchange

41, 49, 51, 52, 66, 66B, 78, 78A, 79, 79A, 97, 97E, 98, 98M, 105, 143, 143M, 160, 160A, 160M, 183, 183B, 197, 333, 334, 335, 506

Along Boon Lay Way

49, 99, 333, Private bus service 625, 990

Disclaimer:

The information in this brochure is meant for educational purposes and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. Please seek your doctor's advice before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition. Information is accurate at the time of printing.