

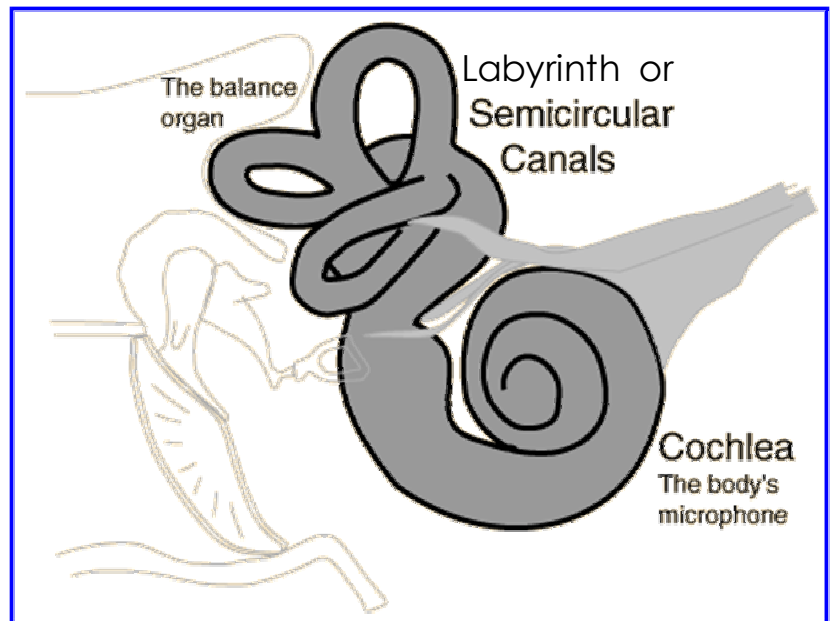
# Labyrinthitis

## The Inner Ear

Acute labyrinthitis is thought to be caused by a virus. It is thought that the virus irritates the balance mechanism which is located in the inner ear. The balance mechanism is called a labyrinth: hence the name.

With this condition people have difficulty with balance and sometimes get nauseous. Lying down quickly or sudden changes in movement can cause the room to spin. You need to make a difference between this and just feeling a little lightheaded when you get up quickly. Sometimes people have a difficult time driving because

as they look over their shoulder, everything starts spinning again. If that's the case with you, make sure you're not driving until this is a little bit better. This can take some time to resolve.



Because the inner ear is deeply embedded in the temporal bone, it is difficult to study this disease. Very few people would want to have their skull opened up just to find out what kind of virus it is that's really in the inner ear when this disease strikes.

Acute labyrinthitis can take up to six weeks to resolve. It is a very annoying disease and most people get plenty frustrated with the disease before it leaves them. There is really no known treatment since this is a virus.

Some people, if they catch the disease early enough, are benefited by prednisone. You will know rather quickly if prednisone helps you if that's what is prescribed for you, as it should act within the first day. If you are not lucky enough to have benefit from that, there is one medication that some people find helpful. It is called Antivert (Meclizine). Remember that Antivert doesn't get rid of the disease; it only makes the symptoms more tolerable. The medicine may make you quite tired and be careful if you take it and drive or work in an area that requires your full attention.

Complications of the disease are rare. However, there maybe some overlap in these symptoms with more serious disorders. So if you have any ringing of the ears, hearing loss, progressive vomiting, headache or fever, please return either to the office or to the emergency room immediately.

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