DIZZY CLINICS
AUSTRALIA

Labyrinthitis

What is it?

Labyrinthitis is an inner ear condition caused by inflammation of both the hearing and balance parts of the ear. It results in sudden vertigo (a spinning sensation), hearing loss, and often ringing in the ear (tinnitus). It typically affects just one ear. Labyrinthitis can sometimes trigger BPPV later on, or lead to longer-term balance and hearing problems if the nerve is affected.

Common symptoms

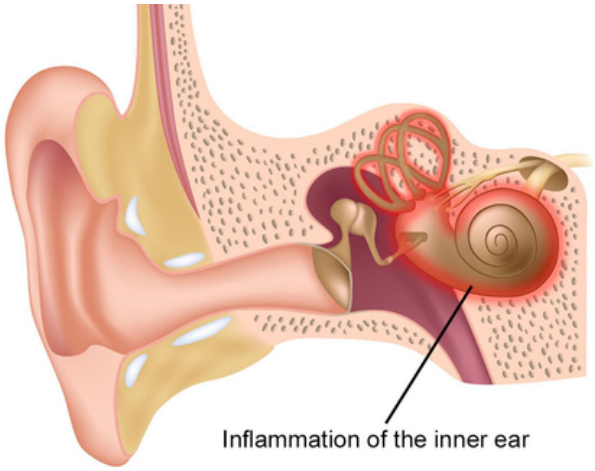
- Sudden vertigo lasting hours to days
- Nausea and vomiting
- Hearing loss in one ear
- Tinnitus (ringing or buzzing)
- Unsteadiness or trouble walking

Why does it happen?

Labyrinthitis is usually caused by a viral infection, such as a cold or flu. In rare cases, it can be bacterial. The infection inflames the inner ear, disrupting signals to the brain that control balance and hearing.

How is it diagnosed?

It's diagnosed based on your symptoms, medical history, and by ruling out other causes such as stroke. Hearing and balance tests may be used to confirm the diagnosis.

What are the treatments?

- Short-term medications (anti-nausea +/- steroids)
- Vestibular rehabilitation to improve balance - **needs to be started ASAP**
- Hearing support (e.g. hearing aids) if loss persists
- Staying active and regular walking outdoors