Tuning Forks

In ENT, tuning forks are used to clinically test hearing and identify the type of hearing loss.

The parts of a tuning fork are:

- Base plate or footplate
- Shaft
- Prongs that vibrate producing sound

The shaft or the footplate carries a number which is the frequency at which the tuning fork vibrates and is denoted in Hertz (Hz). The commonly used tuning forks to test hearing are 256 Hz, 512 Hz and 1024 Hz. These frequencies correspond to the speech frequencies. Tuning forks of lower frequencies (like 128 Hz) produce vibrations that are felt more than they are heard, while those of higher frequencies produce more overtones.

More information:

- Tests done with these tuning forks include Rinne's, Weber's and the absolute bone conduction test.
- Other tests, not routinely performed, are the Bing's test, Stenger's, Gelle's and Chimani Moos test.
- If you have to perform these tests with a single tuning fork, pick the 512 Hz.
- To set the tuning fork into vibration, always strike it against a firm but yielding surface like the elbow and not hard surfaces like table tops.