

A guide to vestibular rehabilitation

Introduction

This leaflet gives you information about vestibular rehabilitation and how best to manage the symptoms.

What is vestibular rehabilitation?

Normally the brain is able to put together information from the eyes, joints and the balance organ in the ear (vestibular apparatus), to make it easy to move around without dizziness. If the balance organ is not working properly, you can feel dizzy or unsteady. To relieve this, the brain must be helped to put this information together in a new way.

Vestibular rehabilitation often involves exercises, to help the brain process the information it receives in a new way, so it can regain balance and reduce symptoms.

Why should I see a physiotherapist?

The physiotherapist will assess your dizziness/unsteadiness and will give you advice on the best way to help you manage and ease your symptoms. This is often with exercises.

What can I expect?

The physiotherapist will want to know about your dizziness/unsteadiness and how it affects your daily life. They may then assess your balance in various positions such as walking and standing. They may also carry out other tests to assess the dizziness. The physiotherapist will then work with you to find the best way to manage your symptoms.

Why do I need to exercise?

Certain exercises help the brain learn how not to feel dizzy, so that you can take control of the symptoms you experience.

Recovering after an episode of dizziness can happen automatically, but the speed of recovery can vary and you may still have symptoms.

Reference No.

GHPI0519_01_24

Department

Physiotherapy

Review due

January 2027

Patient Information

You may find it unpleasant to move your head as it brings on dizziness, but avoiding movement delays recovery and can also lead to developing neck tension.

In addition, if you have symptoms for a long time, other problems may develop. These include:

- Loss of confidence
- Unable to plan your life
- Fewer hobbies or leisure activities

Will the exercises bring on my symptoms?

The exercises you will be shown and taught by the physiotherapist are designed to 're-programme' your brain to 'tune-out' the dizzy sensations.

The exercises will bring on your symptoms, but in a very controlled way. This is essential to the 're-programming' and if you do not bring on the dizziness at all, the exercises will not work.

When should I do the exercises?

You will be guided on how to do the exercises at your own pace, so you can plan and fit them into your day.

Will I need to come to physiotherapy again?

You may need a follow-up appointment with the physiotherapist to make sure that the exercises are suited to you and to check on your progress.

Once you are familiar with the exercises and are confident about knowing how to do them, you will be encouraged to do them independently to help manage your condition.

Patient Information

Contact information

For further advice or information please contact:

Therapy Department

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 3040

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:00pm

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 8527

Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:00pm

Content reviewed: January 2024

Making a choice

Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation

* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>