



Pediatric vestibular therapy

At Children's HealthSM, our occupational therapists specialize in vestibular rehabilitation to help children with balance concerns and sensory processing disorders. We're experienced in evaluating children and developing vestibular therapy programs tailored to their specific needs.

We work closely with your child's doctors to provide seamless, comprehensive care that helps with mobility, visual-motor skills and motion sensitivity. Our caring therapists ensure that your child's therapy moves at the right pace for them, so they build new skills gradually and safely.

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What is pediatric vestibular therapy?

Vestibular therapy helps children address challenges that affect their vestibular system, which controls balance and coordination. Whenever your child moves, their brain processes information about what they see, where they are and how they are moving.

If your child has difficulty with vestibular function, they might seem off-balance or uncoordinated. You might notice that they avoid activities such as swinging or seek activities that make them feel unbalanced, like spinning in circles.

Vestibular therapy uses specific activities to help your child move in more coordinated, balanced and safe ways. We help your child build balance and mobility skills with fun exercises like bouncing on a trampoline or doing an obstacle course.

What are the benefits of pediatric vestibular therapy?

Vestibular therapy improves balance, coordination and motor planning skills, helping your child become more stable as they move. Vestibular therapy can help children who have dizziness (**vertigo**), delayed motor function **development** and other mobility problems.

This type of therapy can also help children who have sensory processing disorders related to vestibular function. They may be too sensitive to vestibular input (such as changing direction or moving their head), so they avoid certain movements. Or, they might not be sensitive enough, so they are constantly moving.



The goal of their therapy is to help them feel more comfortable with different movements or feel calmer so they can stay still. You should expect your child's everyday routines and behaviors to improve.

What are the side effects of pediatric vestibular therapy?

Some children who experience dizziness may feel dizzy when they start therapy, but these symptoms should improve within a few days. Some children with sensory processing disorders may feel overstimulated or tired after therapy.

Our therapists are very careful not to push your child, keeping activities within their abilities so that they feel comfortable. If you notice that your child is hyperactive, tired or stressed after therapy, please let us know so we can adjust their treatment plan.

What are the risks of pediatric vestibular therapy?

Vestibular therapy is very safe. During therapy, your child might be at risk of falling or tripping. To protect your child, we equip our therapy spaces with gym mats, foam padding and other soft surfaces that reduce the risk of injury.

What to expect before pediatric vestibular therapy

Your child's **occupational therapist (OT)** will use some standardized tests to assess their balance, coordination, visual-motor skills and other vestibular functions. We will also ask you about your child's movements and any difficulties that you've noticed. You may want to write these down before the appointment and bring them with you.

Your child's therapist will also watch them move and play. They may be able to see issues with balance and coordination that suggest your child could benefit from vestibular therapy.

What to expect during pediatric vestibular therapy

Our occupational therapists use fun activities and games to help your child improve their vestibular function.

Their exercises may include:

- Going through an obstacle course
- Jumping on a trampoline
- Swinging
- Using a balance beam or balance board
- Riding on scooter boards
- Going up and down ramps
- Dancing and moving to music
- Doing yoga

These activities keep your child motivated and practice working on their strength, balance and coordination. They challenge your child's brain to process and understand new situations, improving their ability to control their movements during therapy and during play and daily activities.

How do I prepare my child for pediatric vestibular therapy?

If your child feels nervous about therapy, you can assure them that their appointment is designed to be fun. Our therapists never push children into uncomfortable situations.

Your child should wear comfortable clothes and tennis shoes to therapy. If they typically use things like sunglasses or headphones for sensory issues, please bring those items.

What questions should I ask my provider about pediatric vestibular therapy?

We encourage you to ask your therapist about vestibular treatment.

You might ask:

- How often does my child need vestibular therapy?
 - How long will my child need vestibular therapy?
 - Would my child benefit from other forms of physical or occupational therapy, or other treatments?
 - Why do you think my child needs vestibular therapy?
-

Pediatric vestibular therapy doctors and providers

Children's Health physical therapists and occupational therapists work together to create a personalized vestibular therapy plan for your child. You can trust our team of experienced therapists to help your child improve their balance, coordination and abilities.



Eric Remster, MD
Pediatric Neurologist



Mathew Stokes, MD
Pediatric Neurologist



Troy Smurawa, MD
Sports Medicine Physician



Ted Walters, AuD
Audiologist



Britney Etheridge-Cox, APRN, PNP-PC
Nurse Practitioner - Neurology

Frequently Asked Questions

Will my child be able to balance better after pediatric vestibular therapy?



What can I do at home to support my child during pediatric vestibular therapy?



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