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Vestibular Rehabilitation

What is Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy?

Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) is an exercise-based program for reducing symptoms related to vestibular (inner ear/balance) disorders. The goal is to decrease dizziness and motion sensitivity, increase balance, and improve quality of life. Research shows the brain and inner ears recover best if therapy begins during the first few weeks after a vestibular deficit occurs.

VRT is a treatment involving specific exercises to eliminate or significantly reduce both the primary and secondary symptoms caused by vestibular disorders by promoting central nervous system compensation for inner-ear deficits. The goal is to decrease the identified dizziness and visual symptoms, increase balance and functional mobility, stabilize walking, decrease falls, and increase general activity levels to maximize quality of life.

Why a Physical Therapist?

Physical therapists often specialize in vestibular rehabilitation. Much of a therapist's job is to help get a person moving again and manage the dizziness simultaneously. Exercise and performing daily activities are the primary ways of accomplishing this goal. Physical therapists can provide essential coping strategies that help to facilitate activity while minimizing symptoms. If specific activities or chores around the house or in the community cause dizziness, then learning ways to perform them differently may help to keep the dizziness to a minimum. Activities that were simple before the vestibular disorder may become difficult, causing fatigue and dizziness. A therapist can help you work through some of these issues immediately and get you moving, and back to a productive life more quickly.

Therapy for vestibular disorders takes many forms. The type of exercise utilized depends upon the unique problems that the individual demonstrates during the evaluation. Some exercises are geared toward helping with balance, some with helping the brain resolve differences in the inner ear signals, and some with improving the ability to visually focus. In addition, general exercise is often prescribed to improve overall physical health and well-being.

What Should I Expect on My First Visit?

VRT begins with a comprehensive clinical assessment that will include gathering a detailed history and how symptoms affect daily activities, medications, hearing or vision problems, other medical issues, fall history, previous and current activity level, and living/work situation.

After collecting a detailed history, your therapist will administer functional tests/measures to objectively evaluate symptoms. The therapist will screen the visual and vestibular system, posture, balance, muscle strength, range of motion, sensation, and coordination. At this point, a customized plan is developed from the referring physician's recommendations, findings of the clinical assessment, results from laboratory testing, and input from the patient about their goals for rehabilitation.

Before leaving your first Vestibular Rehab visit you can expect to be provided with a home exercise program. This is an important part of the VRT process. Compliance with the home exercise program is essential to help achieve both patient and rehabilitation goals. Along with exercise, patient and caregiver education is an integral part of VRT. Many patients and family members find it useful to understand the science behind their vestibular problems, and how it relates to the difficulties that you may be experiencing in daily life. Your therapist can explain how to deal with these difficulties and what to expect from VRT. Education is important because it can help take away much of the mystery of what you may be experiencing, which can help reduce anxiety that may occur because of your vestibular disorder.

For further Vestibular information please visit [Vestibular.org \(https://vestibular.org/\)](https://vestibular.org/)