

# Basic Vestibular Rehabilitation Exercises *(page 1 of 3)*

The following advice and exercises are also available as an online interactive module with helpful videos of the exercises and a 6 week treatment plan

<https://balance.lifeguidehealth.org>

## Introduction

Normally your body uses three sources of information to help you stand up and move around:

- **your eyes** - so you can see where you are in relation to your surroundings.
- **your neck, back and leg muscles** - to tell you if you are standing up or sitting down etc.
- **your vestibular system** - which is in your inner ears, tells you if you are moving or are still.

All these senses send messages to your brain which acts like a computer combining the information to give you a stable picture of the world and control your head, eye and body movements. If one of these senses are faulty or sending wrong information you may get a symptom of dizziness.

## Vertigo

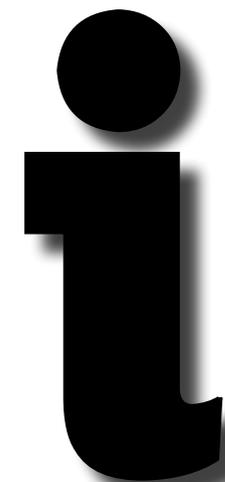
This is a strong sensation of spinning which happens suddenly, can last several hours, and usually causes you to be sick and to be unable to stand up, walk or drive.

## Long-lasting dizziness and imbalance

The changes in the inner ear which can cause vertigo result in a change in the signals given out by the faulty balance organ. Over time, your brain adjusts to these new signals and so you become less dizzy.

## Recovery

Recovering from dizziness is like getting your sea legs. At first being at sea can make people feel unsteady and sick, but if you remain at sea then gradually the brain learns to cope with the new balance signals from the eyes, body and balance organs and the sickness disappears. In the same way, the brain can gradually overcome the dizzy symptoms.



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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Date written: July 2014  
Last revised: August 2017  
Review date: May 2020  
Version: 1.3  
Code: PI1209

## Exercises

Balance retraining exercises are designed to help give your balance system all the practise it needs to cope with the symptom of dizziness.

You can only learn to cope with the new balance signals if you practise the activities that cause the dizzy sensations. The exercises given will help speed up your natural recovery process.

To find out whether these exercises are right for you, simply try out the following exercises on the next page. If they do not make you dizzy even when you perform them relatively quickly, then they will not help you. If they do make you dizzy then this is a sign that your balance system needs practise with these exercises/movements.

If you find an exercise difficult, do it slowly with plenty of rest intervals. You may find you are a little dizzy as you practise the exercises, but don't rush them and make yourself feel worse.

If you have an attack of severe dizziness after you have started a course of exercises you will probably want to stop doing them for a while. Only count the dizziness as severe if you have to stop what you're doing for 4 hours or more because of it. When the dizziness has eased you may find you recover from the attack more quickly by doing these exercises again, but you will probably need to start them slowly.

Stop doing the exercises if they cause you any pain, ringing in the ears, deafness, really severe dizziness, shortness of breath, chest pains or fainting.

## Preparation for the exercises

Some people find that relaxing before and after they do the exercises is a good idea.

To help you relax, shrug your shoulders up and down, and circle them around.

You can also try breathing steadily while you count slowly "1, 2, 3" in and "1, 2, 3" out, but don't breathe so slowly or deeply that you feel light-headed or faint.

To get the most benefit from these exercises you will need to find time in your daily routine to do them at least once a day; even better twice a day. They take less than 10 minutes to perform.

After each exercise you will need to score how dizzy the exercise made you feel.

0 – no dizziness, 1 - slight dizziness, 2 - moderate dizziness, 3 - very dizzy

You can use the space below to score how dizzy you feel

1. Shakes: score \_\_\_\_\_
2. Nods: score \_\_\_\_\_
3. Nods with eyes closed score \_\_\_\_\_
4. Shakes with eyes closed score \_\_\_\_\_
5. Holding finger pointing upwards and shaking score \_\_\_\_\_
6. Holding finger pointing sideways and nodding score \_\_\_\_\_

## Head movement exercises

### 1. Shake:

- turn your head from right to left and back again 10 times in 10 seconds.
- twist your head round as far as it will go comfortably.
- look in the direction your head is pointing.
- wait 10 seconds after you have done this then do 10 more.

### 2 Nod:

- nod your head up and down and back again 10 times in 10 seconds.
- tip your head as far as it will go comfortably.
- after first repetition wait 10 seconds then try another set of 10.

**3 & 4** Repeat the shake and nod exercises with your eyes closed.

**5** Now hold your finger pointing upwards in front of you and carry out the shake exercise while staring at your finger.

Do not let your eyes move from your finger.

**6** Hold your finger pointing sideways in front of you and carry out the nod exercise while staring at your finger.

Now look at your piece of paper with your scores of dizziness next to each exercise.

If you scored a 0 you do not need to do this exercise again, as your brain has learnt how to perform this task without giving you a symptom.

If you scored a 1 or 2 then you need to keep practising this exercise daily. If you scored a 3 you need to try this exercise slowly.

As well as these basic exercises, you should also look into any other movements that make you feel dizzy, then practise these by doing them slowly and for a short duration every day then gradually increase the speed and duration.

You may also want to look at general activities to help with balance such as daily walking or tai chi.

## Further information

For more information on dizziness go to:

### Ménière's Society

The charity for people with dizziness and balance disorders.

They have a number of useful leaflets including one on vestibular rehabilitation.

[www.menieres.org.uk](http://www.menieres.org.uk)

### NHS Choices

The NHS website has a huge number of information leaflets. Search for 'dizziness' to read their information.

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)