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Audiology Department

Patient Information

Vestibular Rehabilitation

Document history

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This leaflet is for patients experiencing dizziness and/or balance problems and, more specifically, for those patients referred for vestibular rehabilitation. It explains what vestibular rehabilitation is, when it might be suitable, and what it involves.

What is Vestibular Rehabilitation?

Vestibular rehabilitation is a form of treatment suitable for some individuals with problems with **dizziness** and/or **imbalance**. It usually involves putting together an **exercise plan** to help you with your symptoms.

When is Vestibular Rehabilitation suitable?

The balance organs in the ears normally control the co-ordination of our eyes and head when we move our head in relation to our body. If there is some damage to one or both balance organs then your eye and head movements may not be fully co-ordinated, leading to dizziness. Damage to one or both of the balance organs can also lead to imbalance. Abnormal breathing patterns can also lead to dizziness.

What does Vestibular Rehabilitation involve?

At your first appointment you will be seen by a Clinical Audiologist and/or Physiotherapist for one hour. If suitable an individualised exercise programme will be devised for you. You will be given written guidance on the exercises to take home. The plan may involve one or more of the following:

- **Head/eye co-ordination exercises for dizziness**
- **Standing balance exercises**
- **Walking exercises**
- **Breathing control exercises**

You are usually required to carry out the exercises at home on a twice daily basis. You will usually be seen by the physiotherapist to see how you have progressed with your exercises on a monthly basis, either until you are better or you are no longer making any further improvement.

At each appointment your progress will be monitored and your exercise programme updated as suitable. On average patients require three to four appointments in total, but your treatment will be discussed with you on an individual basis. Patients who have had particular problems with their breathing control often need more appointments than this.

Benefits

The aims of vestibular rehabilitation are to reduce dizziness and imbalance by encouraging your brain to adjust and compensate for any problem in the balance organ(s); by encouraging the best use and combination of the information you receive from the balance organs in your ears, your vision, and the feeling in your feet; and by re-establishing normal breathing patterns. A previous study in our clinic indicated that when patients were carefully selected for their suitability 80% of patients seen for vestibular rehabilitation showed improvement, with 42% showing significant improvement.

Risks and Alternatives

Often problems with dizziness get better over time without any intervention but some people require formal rehabilitation exercises. Not all patients experiencing dizziness and/or imbalance, however, are suitable for this treatment. Some balance symptoms may remain even after a full course of vestibular rehabilitation, especially when undertaking activities or in environments which are challenging for balance.

If vestibular rehabilitation is not suitable or does not resolve all your symptoms then medical or surgical management may be available dependent on your particular condition.

Contacts/Further information

For further information please telephone 01223 217797 to speak to a Vestibular Audiologist or 01223 217568 to speak to a Vestibular Physiotherapist.