

# Dizziness & Balance

## How to start your recovery

To maintain our balance, we require information from three separate systems:

1. Our eyes
2. Our vestibular system
3. Our skin, muscles & joints.

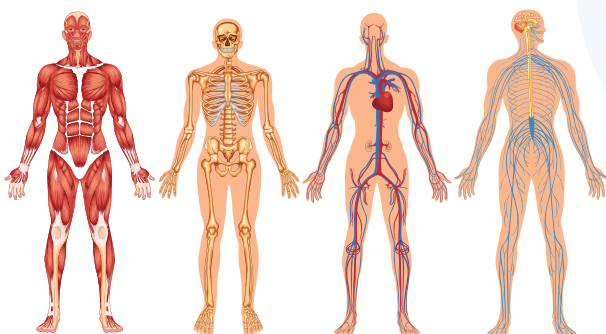
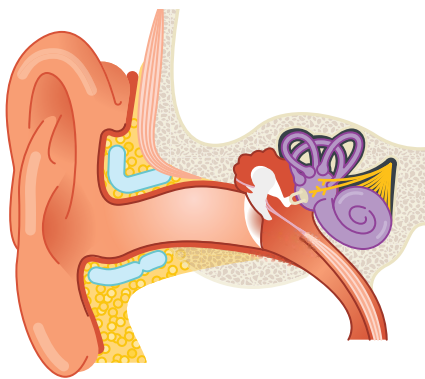
Disruption to any of these systems can affect how we balance and may cause symptoms of dizziness, vertigo, visual problems, nausea, fatigue and concentration problems.

The brain uses information taken from all three systems to control our posture, movements, and a sense of where we are in the space around us, which gives us confidence in our balance.

**Exercise** will challenge each of these systems. Evidence shows that exercises can improve symptoms such as poor balance, veering when walking, dizziness, visual symptoms, and more.

Maintaining an active balance system needs to be part of your **everyday routine**. Continue to challenge your balance system and it will continue to improve.

## The Balance System



### Eyes

Our eyes offer information about where we are in relation to place and people and helps us to align to objects in our environment.

### Vestibular System

Balance organs (known as the vestibular system) situated within the inner ear provide information that helps us to orientate to where we are, control our upright position and help keep visual focus when moving our head.

### Sensation

Sensors in every joint, muscle and across the skin provide information about what position our body is in and how close we are to losing our balance. This information helps to control posture and movements to counteract this.

# Exercises

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You can do these from a sitting or standing position. Keep feet at hip width apart. If standing, position yourself in a corner with the walls behind you for safety. Begin slowly, these exercises will challenge your balance and dizziness, but it will improve with practice.

## Head movements

- A. Turn your head to look from side to side. Repeat 5 times. When comfortable increase gradually, adding 1 head turn each day to a maximum of 10 times.
- B. Move your head to look up to ceiling and then down, taking chin to chest. Repeat 5 times. When comfortable increase gradually adding 1 repetition each day to a maximum of 10 times.

## Bending forwards

In sitting, bend forwards to take your head and shoulders towards your lap. Alternatively, in standing, bend to take your head and shoulders forwards and down, reaching toward a chair seat then return to upright again. Repeat 5 times. When comfortable increase gradually adding 1 repetition each day to a maximum of 10 times.

## Sit to stand

Practise standing up from a chair (a solid chair is more suitable for this), use your arms if you require but as little as you can manage. Slowly sit down, controlling the speed using your leg muscles. Aim to complete 5, when comfortable increase, adding 1 stand a day to a maximum of 10. Place walking aid in front for safety if required.

## Eyes Closed

Practice closing your eyes while sitting or standing still. Begin by focusing on the weight distributed through your feet. Wiggle or squeeze your toes then consciously feel the ground beneath your feet.

Close your eyes for 10 seconds. Increase to up to 30 seconds as you become steadier and more confident. Repeat 5 times. You may feel a gentle sway, try to keep the weight evenly distributed over your feet.

## Go for a walk every day

Begin with 5-10 minutes and gradually build up to 30 minutes per day. Start with a quiet location but vary your route with time. Gradually try to go to busier places.

You may feel your heart rate increase, get a little sweaty and slightly short of breath, but can still hold a conversation. This is a normal response to exercise.

Try not to hold onto anyone but do use your walking aid if you have one.

**Look around** and target your vision to pick out details on things near and far away. For example, the pattern on leaves and flowers or try to pick out everything that is red on your route.

Try to walk in the daylight. This will help with your vitamin D levels and sleep patterns.

**Do not exceed more than 6/10 discomfort with symptoms, pain or dizziness. Should your pain persist beyond 48 hours or headaches are triggered, please stop that exercise.**

## Disclaimer

This booklet has been produced and edited by the ACPIVR. You must not rely on this information as an alternative to medical advice. It is to be issued following assessment by health professionals with specialist knowledge in balance and vestibular health care. The information provided must not be used in the absence of prior medical or therapy assessment.

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