

Treating Vertigo with Vestibular Rehabilitation

Rather than being a condition itself, vertigo is a symptom, a sensation that your body or your surroundings are spinning. Some who experience vertigo find that it is barely noticeable while others find the severity makes it difficult to maintain balance and perform everyday tasks.

Vertigo is frequently caused by afflictions to the vestibular system, which may come in the form of dysfunctions, disorders, trauma or viruses. The vestibular system, located in your inner ear, controls your sense of movement, your body orientation and your balance.

Along with your eyes, muscles, and joints, your vestibular system is constantly sending feedback to your brain about your body's movement and orientation. When this system is afflicted, these messages can get lost in translation.

A vestibular physiotherapist can assess the potential cause of your symptoms and provide treatment to help decrease spinning sensations and improve balance.

Dizziness and Vertigo

Vertigo is sometimes confused with dizziness. While dizziness is an umbrella term for the sensation of abnormal or unwanted movement, vertigo is more specific and implies an element of rotation in the perceived movement. With vertigo, either your body or the room around you feels like it is spinning.

Dizziness can be caused by a number of factors, including afflictions of the inner ear, reduced blood flow to the brain, problems in the neck, mild concussions and psychological trauma. Vertigo, in contrast, is specific to afflictions of the vestibular system in the inner ear.

It can be difficult to accurately describe a sensation of dizziness. Vertigo, on the other hand, is easier to describe because it always involves a spinning sensation either internally or externally.

Vertigo and dizziness are similar in that they are both symptoms and not a diagnosis. They may be experienced separately or hand in hand. Working with a physiotherapist can help you identify the cause of both of these symptoms and establish a regimen for overcoming them.

Vestibular Physiotherapy for Vertigo

Evidenced in a multitude of studies over the past 25 years, vestibular physiotherapy is effective for treating people experiencing dizziness and vertigo. These studies have

demonstrated a reduction in symptoms, improved function, increased balance and reduced risk of falling following a vestibular physiotherapy program. In particular, research has found significant improvement where the exercises are tailored to the specific needs of each person.

Our vestibular physiotherapy programs can be delivered as a home exercise program performed three times every day or as supervised classes. Both approaches have achieved significant changes for our patients. The length of each vestibular physiotherapy program varies, but generally changes can be seen within 4 to 6 weeks.

Vestibular physiotherapy is especially effective for treating vertigo symptoms that are triggered or made worse by movement.

Rehabilitation will focus on reducing the spinning sensations associated with vertigo as well as disturbances to your vision and impaired balance. Your physiotherapist will design and monitor a tailored exercise program that will reduce these symptoms over time.

Exercises will include gaze stabilization, movement desensitization, static and dynamic balance, and functional training.

First, one of our dedicated physiotherapists will perform a comprehensive assessment of your vertigo and/or dizziness to establish the cause of your symptoms. If we're unable to determine the cause of your symptoms, we'll refer you to a medical specialist for more extensive testing before we start you on an exercise regimen.

Expect your tailored vestibular rehabilitation program to include a variety of targeted movements and exercises.

Habituation exercises will involve specific movements designed to gently stimulate symptoms of dizziness. We use these to desensitize your vestibular system to those movements, which helps reduce overall symptoms.

Gaze stabilization is aimed at improving focus. These exercises train your brain to perceive yourself and surroundings correctly as stationary, which helps decrease the likelihood of experiencing vertigo.

Balance and gait exercises challenge your vestibular balance system to make it stronger. These tailored exercises will improve balance and increase your confidence in walking without falling.

Repositioning techniques are used for a specific type of vertigo known as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV). BPPV occurs when small calcium carbonate particles break loose within the inner ear. This might occur without reason or it may be associated with an isolated incident. As the loose particles move around the inner ear, they often cause an overwhelming sensation of spinning.

BPPV is particularly aggravated when changing position, such as rolling over in bed or getting up from a chair, because the particles move around the inner ear and cause an abrupt onset of symptoms.

Various manoeuvres, such as the Epley manoeuvre, have been successful for treating BPPV. Such manoeuvres should always be performed by your physiotherapist during appointments and not attempted in the home setting.

Factors that affect how long a vestibular physiotherapy program will take include how long you've been experiencing vertigo, how regularly you perform your vestibular exercises, how significant your nausea symptoms are, and the presence of other medical, emotional, or psychological issues.

Living with Vertigo

If you struggle with vertigo, you should try to keep as active as possible. Anything from a gentle walk around the park or a visit to the gym where tolerated will help manage your symptoms.

Carefully monitor your recovery time after each activity. If an activity causes you to experience symptoms, they should subside within 30 minutes. If symptoms take more than 30 minutes to settle, the activity was too challenging and should be modified to shorten your recovery time. You can talk to your physiotherapist about ways to make activities more manageable.

Remember, we are here to make living with vertigo easier. A licenced member of our team is waiting to help you regain stability and get you walking with confidence. Call us today at 1-833-U-R-HEARD or book your appointment online [here](#). We look forward to being a part of your journey.