

Persistent Postural Perceptual Dizziness (PPPD or 3PD)



What is PPPD?

This is a sensation of constant vague dizziness or fog which has been present for more than three months and is usually worse on certain movements, or in busy places. Symptoms will usually improve if sitting in a quiet area or lying down, but not always. It can sometimes be referred to as visual vertigo or space motion discomfort.

This usually occurs after an inner ear problem; your brain becomes more reliant on the eyes for balance and you no longer move naturally. The inner ear stops interacting with the other parts of the balance system the way it had previously. Because your eyes have more to do your brain struggles to keep you balanced which results in a lightheaded, or off balance sensation, which may cause you to stagger.

What can be done to help this?

Your physiotherapist will create an exercise programme to help to address your individual triggers. The exercises will involve working up to your symptoms to allow your balance system to readjust to movement; balance and walking exercises; focus exercises or watching videos to improve your tolerance of specific situations.

As your balance system has become more sensitive it is important to do your exercises as instructed to ensure a smoother recovery. It will take time to carry over into your daily life as the tasks are broken down for the exercises and only when we are able to incorporate the exercises into life do we see the results. If your system is particularly adapted, then this may take several months to readjust.

Due to the nature of these symptoms it is common for people to feel anxious or stressed. If you are affected in this way your symptoms may feel worse and you may need some help to manage those feelings. Please discuss this with your therapist so we can look at ways of helping you manage the anxiety that can come with these sensations.

Exercise

Resuming regular exercise will help your balance system recover slowly. During your normal day to day activities and during exercise, you might think that keeping your head in a fixed position will help prevent dizziness but doing this actually does more harm than good. It is very important to move as naturally as possible to allow your balance system to return to normal.

Here are some simple balance exercises you could try at home:

- Focus on a point in front of you, preferably on a blank wall and shake your head like you are saying “no” or “yes”. Do this until your symptoms

start. Try to repeat this 2-3 times per day. If you can manage 30 seconds without getting any symptoms, then you do not need to do this exercise.

- Practise standing with your feet closer together, try holding this position for 30 seconds. If you do not feel steady, try holding onto something. When you feel steady enough to do this without holding on then start doing this when you are washing your hands or brushing your teeth.

“Stay safe when doing these exercises. Have someone or something nearby to hold on to when you start doing them.”

For more advice on your balance system and exercises see our [balance page](#)

General Health

Your GP may wish to monitor your blood pressure over a period of time. Both high and low blood pressure can cause dizziness. If you have palpitations, please inform your GP about this.

On occasions dizziness can be brought on by prescription medication. This is especially so with:

- Antidepressants
- Epilepsy drugs
- Medications to control high blood pressure
- Anxiety medication
- Sleeping tablets

If you take one or a combination of these medications, it may be worthwhile speaking to your GP about the doses or whether or not you need them.

A good diet and healthy sleeping pattern will make you feel healthier. Reduce the amount of ‘screen time’ as this can cause eye strain.

Alcohol can affect the part of the brain that controls balance so we advise reducing alcohol intake.

Make sure you have had a recent eye check with your optician. Eye strain can cause symptoms of dizziness

Mental Health

Sometimes, there will be some setbacks in your recovery. Many people with vertigo will feel anxious about resuming activities. This anxiety can affect your confidence in resuming physical activity and delay your recovery. Slow down and increase your activity slowly. Be reassured that feeling this way is quite natural and that most will make a good recovery.

Stress, low mood and anxiety can have many effects on the body. It can make vertigo worse. It is important to address this if you feel that this is a significant problem for you. Your GP may be able to advise you but there is useful online advice on these matters here:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health>

<https://www.lanarkshiremindmatters.scot.nhs.uk/>

Anti-Vertigo and Anti-Sickness Medication

These tablets can help during a bad attack of vertigo but we strongly discourage you from taking these medications on a regular basis especially for prolonged periods as they can cause side effects and prevent you from recovering from the original problem. Please do not take them to “prevent dizziness”.

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