

# Vestibular Hypofunction



## What is Vestibular Hypofunction?

This is when the inner ear part of your balance system is not working properly. The Vestibular system sits in your inner ear and works with your eyes and muscles to keep you balanced. When it is not working properly it sends error messages to the brain and you will experience a feeling of dizziness.

## What causes vestibular hypofunction?

There can be many different causes, the common ones are

- Labyrinthitis or vestibular neuritis
- Previous inner ear conditions
- Changes in the balance systems associated with aging
- Medications
- Concussion or head injury, blood clots or tumours

What are the Common Symptoms?

The symptoms depend on the cause, but most people will feel dizziness or vertigo, nausea, poor balance. You may also struggle to walk when in busy places and in dark rooms, or have a feeling of motion when things move quickly.

### How can Physiotherapy help?

Physiotherapists will give you an individual programme of exercises based on your symptoms and goals to help you manage your symptoms.

This will help your movement return to normal, or they will teach you how to compensate for the parts that are not working properly.

### Exercise

Once your balance improves, you should resume regular exercise which 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.

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

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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.

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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