

Patient information factsheet

Persistent postural perceptible dizziness (3PD)

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about persistent postural perceptible dizziness (3PD). It explains what 3PD is, the symptoms to look out for and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

What is 3PD?

3PD is a constant feeling of dizziness or unsteadiness when upright, moving, or in busy visual environments, such as supermarkets or crowded places.

The symptoms are present nearly all the time, but they can be better or worse throughout the day. As a result, people with 3PD often become anxious about losing their balance or falling, and may avoid situations that make their symptoms worse. This can create a vicious cycle, as the more you worry, the stronger your symptoms become.

What causes 3PD?

In order to maintain balance, your brain receives information from three sources:

- your inner ears (vestibular system)
- your eyes (visual system)
- position sensors in your legs and feet (proprioception)

Your brain uses this information to adjust your muscles, joints and eyes to maintain your balance.

3PD often occurs after a problem with the balance system in the ears. When there is a problem with the balance system in the ears, the brain becomes less reliant on it to maintain balance. After the original problem has resolved, it can take the brain a little while to readjust. This may mean you temporarily continue to have some problems with dizziness or balance in certain situations.

3PD can also occur without a problem with the balance system in your ears and is often related to anxiety.

How is 3PD treated?

Vestibular rehabilitation

In order to reduce the symptoms of 3PD, we need to improve your brain's ability to understand the information given to it by the balance system. We can try to achieve this through vestibular rehabilitation, which is an exercise-based treatment programme for dizziness. The aim is to help your brain relearn how to balance and how to respond to signals from the visual and vestibular systems.

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We will provide you with exercises to complete at home. We will usually ask you to complete your exercises with a busy visual pattern in the background. You should begin the exercises by looking at the pattern for a few minutes to get your brain used to busy visual information. Over time you should start to find it easier to look at the pattern. If you're finding it too easy, try making it a little bit harder by:

- increasing the size of the busy background
- standing up if you were sitting
- gradually bringing your feet closer together
- gently moving your head side to side or up and down while looking at the pattern

Making the exercises harder will better prepare you for difficult visual environments when you are out and about. It is also important to your recovery that you gradually begin returning to busy environments, such as supermarkets. We recommend going at your own pace and building up to a full weekly shop. For example, it might be a good idea to start by only buying a few items and using a trolley for stability. Over time you will be able to shop for longer and rely on the trolley less.

Here is an example of a busy background that may be useful for your exercises:



Meditation and mindfulness

Anxiety often plays a large role in 3PD. Meditation and mindfulness can help break the vicious cycle of anxiety and significantly reduce symptoms.

Mindfulness describes an awareness of ourselves and the world around us. Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing and reduce the negative impact that your dizziness has on your life. Mindfulness involves sitting quietly and paying attention to your thoughts and your body, the sounds around you and the sensation of breathing. It can help bring your attention back whenever your mind starts to wander.

One of the aims of mindfulness is to help you to lead a life where you no longer feel that your dizziness is 'in control of you'. Instead of putting your life on hold until you get rid of your dizziness, mindfulness will help you live a life that is meaningful to you. It will help you to accept your dizziness, rather than fight it, which often makes symptoms worse.

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Maintaining a healthy lifestyle

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise can:

- improve your physical and mental health
- reduce anxiety and the symptoms of 3PD
- improve sleep patterns
- reduce stress

Medications

Your doctor may recommend that you try some antidepressant medications, if appropriate, as they can reduce the symptoms of 3PD.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

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Brintons Terrace
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Useful links

www.vestibular.org/pppd

Useful apps

Calm

Calm is a meditation app designed to help reduce stress, and improve sleep and relaxation.

Headspace

Headspace teaches meditation and mindfulness to help reduce stress, and improve focus and sleep.

iPrescribe Exercise

iPrescribe Exercise provides users with a free 12 week personalised exercise programme.

OurPath

OurPath is an online health coach and support group to help you eat well, stay active and motivate you (from £30 a month).

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