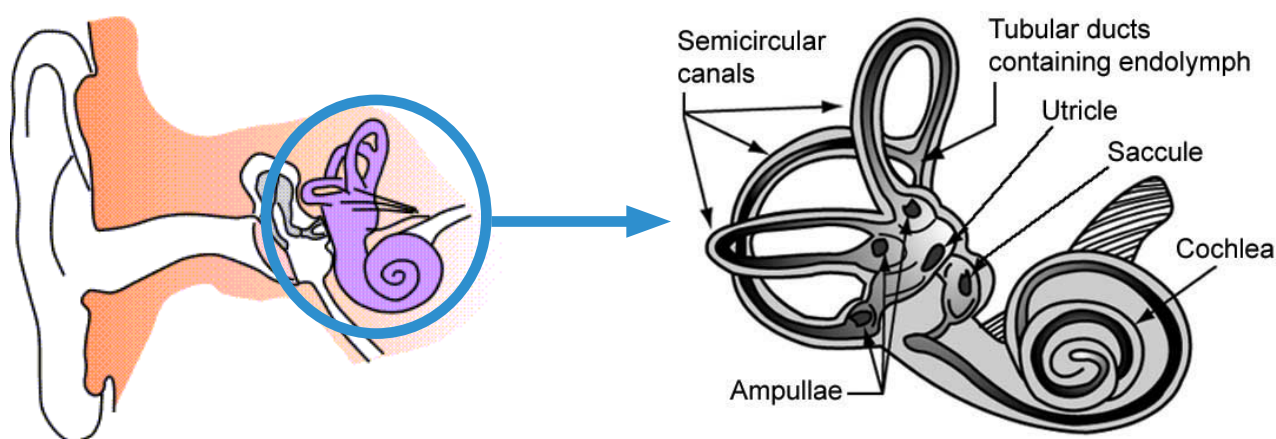


Patient information factsheet

Vestibular rehabilitation

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about vestibular rehabilitation. It explains what vestibular rehabilitation is, what it involves and how it can help with your recovery. 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 the vestibular system?



The vestibular system is located in the inner ears. It is made up of:

- the semicircular canals (these detect movement in multiple planes)
- the otolith organs (the utricle and saccule) (these sense gravity and linear acceleration (change in height or speed), such as going in a lift or accelerating in the car)

The information detected by these structures is sent to the balance system in your brain. The balance system also receives information from your eyes (visual system) and sensors in your limbs (proprioceptive system). The information is used to adjust your muscles, joints and eyes to maintain balance.

Dizziness, imbalance and vertigo

If one of the three important information systems is not working or is damaged, the brain may not receive enough information for the balance system to function properly. This can cause dizziness, vertigo (a feeling of movement or the world moving around you) and imbalance.

Dizziness can be used to describe:

- a spinning sensation
- a falling sensation
- light-headedness
- a general off-balance feeling

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What is vestibular rehabilitation?

Over time, your brain will learn to adapt to the new messages it receives from your impaired vestibular system, as long as you carry on completing your usual daily activities. This is known as compensation. Vestibular rehabilitation is designed to speed up this process by training your brain to adapt to the new messages it is receiving. We will provide you with a customised exercise programme to complete at home.

The idea is that the exercises will bring on some mild symptoms, such as dizziness, in a safe, controlled environment. You should be able to carry on your day as normal after completing your exercises.

Will vestibular rehabilitation work for me?

Most people who are committed to their exercise programme see an improvement in their symptoms. Occasionally other interventions may be necessary.

How quickly will I see results?

You may notice an improvement in your symptoms within six weeks of performing your exercises regularly. The most significant improvement in your symptoms will usually occur within the first six months.

Please note that it is normal to feel worse when you first begin your exercise programme. If you continue with your exercises these symptoms should reduce.

How regularly should I complete my exercises?

We recommend that you complete your exercises three times a day if possible. It is important to complete your exercises this often every day. You may find it helpful to complete your exercises at specific times each day.

How difficult should my exercises feel?

Your vestibular rehabilitation exercises are designed to make you experience mild symptoms. It is important that they are not so difficult that your symptoms become unmanageable and interfere with your day. However, if they do not produce symptoms, they won't work. We advise that you use our zero to five scale to ensure you are performing your exercises at a suitable level (zero being no symptoms at all and five being severe symptoms). Ideally your exercises should produce symptoms that are around one or two on the scale.



What should I do when my exercises become easier?

You should find that over time your exercises start to become easier. If the difficulty of your exercises drops below two on the symptom scale, you should increase the difficulty. You can do this by:

- increasing the speed of your exercise
- increasing the number of repetitions
- altering your position (if you have been completing your exercises sitting down, try standing up, or if you have been standing with a wide stance, try bringing your feet closer together)
- changing your target (if you have been advised to use a target for your exercises, try putting it on a busy background, such as a checkerboard, wrapping paper or patterned wallpaper)

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Your audiologist will also be able to help you adapt your exercise programme.

What else can I do to help my recovery?

Keep active

It is important that you maintain an active lifestyle. Performing some form of exercise on a daily basis will help to speed up your recovery. Try to return to your normal movements. You may have been unknowingly adapting your movements to try to reduce your dizzy symptoms. It is important that your brain is exposed to these movements to help it relearn the messages it receives for them.

Relax

It is important to maintain a good life balance during your recovery. Make sure you take time to relax and do the things you enjoy. You may want to look into meditation and mindfulness (an awareness of ourselves and the world around us) to help you to relax and feel more in control of your symptoms. This can be particularly useful if you have been suffering from anxiety, which is common in people experiencing vestibular problems. There are apps available which you may find useful for meditation and mindfulness, such as Calm and Headspace.

Consider your medications

Medications prescribed to reduce your dizzy symptoms, such as Stemetil and Cinnarizine, can stop your brain from adapting and limit your rehabilitation. You may be advised to stop taking this medication to aid your recovery. Please speak to your doctor before making any changes to your medication.

Pace yourself

Try not to push yourself too fast during your recovery. Remain patient and avoid pushing yourself so far that you need to go to bed to recover. Take small steps to build your confidence before taking on something challenging.

Contact us

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

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalneeds**