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BALANCE REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

**If you have any questions or require further information
or advice, please contact:**

PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT
(between 8:30 am and 5 pm) 01935 384358

Physiotherapy Department

This programme is designed for people who experience varying levels of dizziness associated with eye, head or body movements.

The Balance Mechanism

There are two balance organs, one located in each ear, which send complementary information about head movements to the balance centres in the brain. This information is essential for the maintenance of balance. If either of the balance organs fail to function properly, the brain will receive distorted information resulting in dizziness and imbalance which may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting.

What you can do:

This condition can be overcome by carrying out special exercises which consist of eye, head and body movements designed to encourage the recalibration of the balance sense in the brain and compensate for the unequal balance information coming from the ears, i.e., if you give the brain lots of gentle practice with the 'dizzy' messages, gradually it will get used to them and you will feel less dizzy.

The information in this pack is intended to guide you through the exercise regime. If you have any other questions please don't hesitate to discuss these with your therapist.

Please remember:

Diligence and perseverance with the exercises will be required. The earlier and more regularly the balance exercise regime is carried out, the faster and more complete will be your recovery to normal activity.

Ready to Start

If moving in a certain way has made you feel dizzy you have probably been avoiding these movements. Unfortunately, doing this actually stops your balance system returning to normal. We need to find out which particular movements bring on your symptoms so that these movements can be practised gently as part of your programme. The level of dizziness should be mild/moderate and not unduly unpleasant.

33. Stand on a hard flat surface. Trace the first 10 letters of the alphabet on the floor with your right foot. Repeat with your left. As you improve, try to trace the whole alphabet. Do this first with your eyes open and then with your eyes closed **Do this 3 times a day**
34. Stand near a wall and cross one foot in front of the other. Bring it back to the starting position and then cross it behind the other foot. Bring it back to the starting position. Repeat the same movement with the other foot **Do this 3 times, twice a day**
35. Walk close to a wall with your hand ready to steady you if needed. As you become more confident, try walking with your feet closer together. Finally walk heel to toe. **Practice for 5 minutes a day**
36. Walk close to a wall and turn your head from side to side as you walk. Try to look at different objects as you walk. Gradually turn your head more often and faster. Repeat the exercise, but this time move your head up and down as you walk **Practice for 5 minutes a day**
37. Practice turning round as you walk. At first turn in large circles but gradually make them smaller and smaller. Practice in both directions for 5 minutes a day

22. Repeat the exercise but move your head up and down
23. Repeat the exercise using a large pattern such as a large piece of checked wrapping paper
24. Put 2 cards on the wall next to each other so that when you look at one, you can see the other out of the corner of your eye. Look directly at one card. Look at the other card with your eyes and then turn your head to the card. Try to keep the card in focus during the head movement. Continue for 1-2 minutes.

Repeat the exercise with the cards positioned one above the other

25. Look at a card directly in front of you. Close your eyes and turn your head slightly, imagining that you are still looking at the card. Open your eyes to see if you have been able to keep your eyes on the card. Repeat in the opposite direction. Try to be as accurate as you can. Vary the speed of your head movements

Practice for 5 minutes but take rests as you need them

Improving Your Balance

Stand on a hard flat surface. Make sure the floor is clear. Bare feet may help.

26. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart with your eyes open, looking straight ahead at something on the wall. Use a hand on the wall to steady you if you need to. Take your hands off the wall for longer periods while you try to keep your balance, standing with your arms outstretched and then:
 27. standing with your arms close to your body and then:
 28. standing with your arms folded across your chest.
 Move your feet slowly from one position to another:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| feet apart | Hold each position for 15 |
| feet together | seconds before moving |
| semi heel-to-toe | on slowly to the next |
| heel-to-toe. | position |
29. Repeat the exercise with your eyes closed
30. Repeat the exercises while standing on a softer surface such as a thin carpet
31. Progress on to a thicker pile carpet
32. Progress finally on to a foam sofa cushion. This will be much harder so make sure you are safe

Beginning at the EYE EXERCISES (overleaf), work carefully through the exercises and tick those which bring on your dizziness. If the movements do not bring on your symptoms then cross them off the list.

If none of the eye exercises cause you problems then move on to the HEAD EXERCISES etc., ticking the ones which make you dizzy. If you come to a set of exercises that you find difficult or the dizziness brought on is intolerable do not go any further.

The exercises that you have identified as bringing on your symptoms to a mild/moderate level are exactly those exercises which you need to practice following these guidelines:

1. Don't worry if you can only manage a few exercises at first, you will soon become more confident and able to move on.
2. Try to do the exercises for 5 minutes, 3 times a day, every day. If you cannot do the recommended number, do as many as you can.
3. When you can do an exercise at normal speed with minimal or no dizziness you can cross it off the list and move on to an exercise you find harder.
4. Don't rush and don't make yourself feel very dizzy, and don't be afraid to stop when you've had enough. The level of dizziness you are trying to reproduce should **not** be unduly unpleasant.
5. If you do have an attack of severe dizziness after starting the exercises, you will need to stop for a while. When you are feeling a bit better, it is a good idea to start from the beginning again as the exercises may help you get over the attack more quickly.
6. Stop doing the exercises straight away if you experience any of the following:
 - a. Pain in your head, neck or chest
 - b. Noises in your ears
 - c. Sudden deafness
 - d. Shortness of breath
 - e. Faintness

Do not attempt them again until you have spoken to your therapist.

Eye Exercises

These can be done sitting or lying down. Try to keep your head still. Start slowly then speed up as the dizziness decreases.

1. Look up then down. **Repeat 20 times**
2. Look from one side to the other. **Repeat 20 times**
3. Focus on your index finger tip as you bring it from arms length up to your nose then out again **Repeat 20 times**

Head Exercises

Sit comfortably while performing these exercises. Start slowly but speed up as you improve.

4. Bend your head forwards and backwards with your eyes open **Repeat 20 times**
5. Turn your head from side to side with your eyes open **Repeat 20 times**
6. Tilt your head from side to side with your eyes open **Repeat 20 times**
7. Bend your head forwards and backwards with your eyes closed **Repeat 20 times**
8. Turn your head from side to side with your eyes closed **Repeat 20 times**
9. Tilt your head from side to side with your eyes closed **Repeat 20 times**

Sitting Exercises

10. Shrug your shoulders **Repeat 20 times**
11. Turn your shoulders to the right and the left **Repeat 20 times**
12. Bend forward to pick up an object from the floor then sit up. Start slowly but speed up as you improve. **Repeat 20 times**

Standing Exercises

Use a good solid chair when doing these exercises. One with arms may be useful at first but progress to one without arms.

13. Move from sitting to standing then back again with your eyes open **Repeat 20 times**
14. Move from sitting to standing then back again but with your eyes closed this time **Repeat 20 times**
15. Throw a small ball from hand to hand above eye level. Follow the ball with your eyes **Repeat 10 times**
16. Throw a ball from hand to hand under one knee **Repeat 10 times**

Moving About

Make sure the floor is clear before you start. To get lots of 'Touch information' from your feet it may help to perform these exercises in bare feet.

17. Walk across the room with your eyes open **Repeat 10 times**
18. Using the edge of your bed or sofa as a guide, walk across the room with your eyes closed. Start very slowly **Try to do this 10 times**
19. Facing up the steps at all times, walk up and down the bottom 5 steps of your staircase with your eyes open. Use a banister or the wall at first if you need to **Do this 3 times**
20. Using the banister, repeat the previous exercise with your eyes closed this time **Repeat 3 times**

More Eye Exercises

Do these exercises sitting down at first but progress to doing them standing up as you improve. Work through them slowly.

21. Put a card with writing on it on the wall in front of you at eye level so you can read it. Move your head from side to side keeping the words in focus. Progress by moving your head faster keeping the words in focus **Continue for 1-2 minutes**