



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Vestibular Rehabilitation

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## **Physiotherapy Department**

① For more information, please contact:  
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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction to balance .....	3
Exercise programme .....	5
Tell us what you think of this leaflet .....	7
Teaching, training and research.....	7
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	7

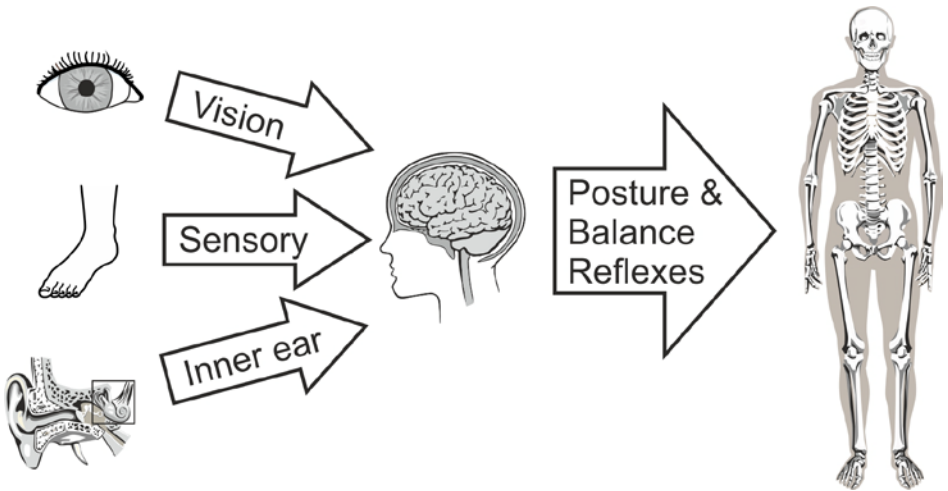
# Introduction to balance

Balance is the ability to maintain an even distribution of weight to remain upright and steady.

We use three key systems to send information relating to our balance to the brain.

- **Visual system:** Your vision provides important information to the brain about your environment
- **Somatosensory / proprioceptive system:** You have special sensors in your muscles, tendons, joints, and skin that help your brain to know how your body is positioned.
- **Vestibular system:** Balance organs in the inner ear tell the brain about the movements and position of your head. This system senses head movement and keeps your eyes stable.

Our brain then responds by sending messages to the body to move in a way that will help you keep your balance and have clear vision while you are moving.



If the system is damaged by disease, aging, or injury, vestibular disorders can result. People with vestibular disorders often experience problems with vertigo, dizziness, visual disturbance and/or imbalance.

# Exercise programme

Depending on how active a person is the brain can learn to use other senses to substitute for the vestibular system damage in a process called compensation; however this sometimes needs help with specific exercises. This is a customised exercise programme to help settle your symptoms.

Vestibular exercises will aim to:

- Improve gaze stability
- Improve postural control
- Ensure the correct use of the 3 key balance systems
- Reduce motion sensitivity
- Reduce falls risk
- Improve confidence
- Help you to resume normal activities

Your physiotherapist will have advised you of an exercise program that can be performed regularly at home. Compliance with the home exercise program is essential to help achieve rehabilitation and goals. It is also important to continue with general activity, so you must gradually increase your normal activities / exercise to previous levels. Recovery can be enhanced by any movement and light, and delayed by periods of inactivity and darkness, i.e. start with a short walk daily and gradually increase the distance.

Exercises may, at first, make symptoms seem worse. But with time and consistent work, symptoms should steadily decrease, which means participation in activities of daily life will become easier. Examples of other forms of exercise that can be effective in increasing your balance include Tai Chi, Pilates and Yoga. Please note if you are starting a new form of exercise and you are unsure whether you are medically fit to do so, we advise that you discuss this with your GP.

Your symptoms can fluctuate secondary to other health factors. Symptomatic relapses can occasionally occur because the brain de-compensates. This can be due to different emotional and/or physical stressors, like personal or job-related pressures, periods of inactivity, a bad cold or flu, extreme fatigue or chronic lack of sleep, or changes in medication. Although it is important to consult with your GP to make sure nothing new has occurred, returning to the exercises that promoted the initial compensation can help promote recovery again.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Laura Wilby, Advanced Clinical Specialist – Vestibular, Physiotherapy, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725611.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

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