

VESTIBULAR REHABILITATION

Vestibular rehabilitation therapy (VRT) is an exercise-based program designed to promote central nervous system compensation for inner ear deficits. VRT can help with a variety of vestibular problems, including benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), and the unilateral or bilateral vestibular hypo-function associated with labyrinthitis and vestibular neuronitis. Even individuals with long-term unresolved inner ear disorders, who have undergone a period of medical management with little or no success, may benefit. VRT can also help people with an acute or abrupt loss of vestibular function following surgery for vestibular problems.

A thorough evaluation is performed during the first visit. Depending on the diagnosis, an individualised exercise program is developed. The programme usually includes adaptation, habituation and substitution exercises. The program is progressed to a more advanced level as soon as the patient performs the exercise correctly. Some of these exercises may at first cause an increase in symptoms. Because of this, patients sometimes give up on VRT, thinking it is making the condition worse. However, in most cases, balance and dynamic visual stabilisation improve over time if the exercises are performed correctly and regularly. Muscle tension, headaches and fatigue will diminish, and symptoms of dizziness, vertigo and nausea will decrease or disappear.