

Vestibular and Vision Problems

What are Vestibular Problems?

Vestibular problems, or balance/dizziness problems, are very common after a concussion. Vestibular problems can be loss of balance, vertigo (feeling like the world is spinning around you), and nausea (feeling sick to your stomach). Episodes of loss of balance or dizziness usually last less than a minute, but they can happen several times a day. They can happen when you are standing, sitting, lying down or when you change position when you are standing, sitting, lying down or when you position (getting up from sitting, for example) and can increase the risk of falling and re-injury.

Dizziness may also be caused from post-concussion migraines and certain medications.

Make sure you tell your health care provider about your vestibular problems and when they happen. They can do tests to see what may be causing the problem.



What are some treatments for balance and dizziness problems?

There are different types of treatments depending on the symptoms you are having. Treatments can include:

- Vestibular rehabilitation
- Epley maneuver
- Canalith or particle repositioning within the ear
- Balance exercises for your specific symptoms

Vestibular rehabilitation is quite effective if you are diagnosed with something called *unilateral peripheral vestibular dysfunction* (inner ear problems that are just on one side).

TIP

If you still have loss of balance, nausea, or dizziness after a couple of weeks you may need to have some testing done by another specialist. Tests will look at your sense of balance, coordination, vision, and hearing.

Vision Problems After Concussion

Your healthcare provider should ask about vision symptoms and check for visual changes or problems. Make sure you let your health care provider know about any specific issues you are having.

Vision problems after a concussion can include:

- Blurred or double vision
- Abnormal eye movements
- Partial loss of vision
- Sensitivity to light, computer, or TV screens
- Changes in spatial awareness (e.g., bumping into things in your environment, missing something that you reach for)
- Visual processing disorders (e.g., where you have problems telling similar-looking letters or shapes apart)
- Headaches related to or triggered by visual activities

If you have vision problems, your primary healthcare provider will do some tests to identify the problem. Depending on the results of your tests, you may need to see a vision specialist, such as an ophthalmologist or an optometrist with specialized rehabilitation training.

What are treatment options for vision problems?

Vision problems usually go away on their own in a couple of weeks. If you are having prolonged vision symptoms you may need some vision-specific treatment depending on your problem. You may undergo vision rehabilitation or be prescribed special glasses such as reading glasses, prism glasses, or tinted glasses.

Additional resources

Below is a list of resources you may find helpful to learn more about vestibular and vision issues as well as tools that may help you with your recovery process.

Concussions: A Guide to Understanding your Recovery (booklet)

<https://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca/file/concussion-a-guide-to-understanding-symptoms-and-r-216241.pdf>

Vision - Caring for Yourself After Concussion (webpage)

<https://www.sjhc.london.on.ca/regional-acquired-brain-injury-outpatient-program/patients/vision>