

CENTRAL OHIO EAR, NOSE AND THROAT, INC.

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BALANCE TRAINING EXERCISES

Your doctor has determined that you have a balance problem that may improve with a rehabilitation program. Head motion stimulates the balance canals of the inner ear. Like a figure skater just learning to spin on skates, you can expect it will take some time for your balance to improve. The brain must learn to overcome the feeling of dizziness. Virtually all patients using these exercises will note improved balance, but it may take a few weeks. **DON'T GIVE UP!** It is important to start slowly because quick head movements can make anyone lightheaded at first. Slowly increase the speed and duration of exercises as tolerated. It is common for people to become dizzy during some of these exercises; this is a required part of the healing process. As in athletics: **"NO PAIN, NO GAIN!"**

CAWTHORNE'S HEAD EXERCISES

Cawthorne's head exercises should be carried out for 5 minutes, 10 times per day. You can expect dizziness when beginning; this feeling should lessen over time with repetition. You should be seated while doing them.

1.) Eye - Ear Exercises:

"Saying NO!"

- Continually focus on your target about 3-5 feet away.
- Rotate head right and left about 30 degrees, motion is like saying "no".
- Move head like a metronome movement, head moves right to left once each second.
- Repeat 10-20 times.

2.) Head Exercises

“Saying Yes!”

- Continually focus on a target about 3-5 feet away.
- Nod head up and down about 30 degrees.
- Motion is like saying “yes”.
- One nod per second.
- Repeat 10-20 times.

3.) Eye Exercises

- Look right then left, right then left, focusing each time on an object.
- Keep head still, only moving eyes.
- For this exercise simply move the eyes back and forth each second.
- Repeat 10-20 times.

4.) Body Exercises

- Stand on a soft (compressible) surface with your eyes open for 1 minute while shifting your weight from your left leg to your right leg.
- On a flat surface, rock back and forth about the ankle without bending at the hip; eyes open; for 30 seconds.
- Practice walking across the room or down a hallway (at least 10 steps):
 - On the ball of your foot forward and then backward
 - On your heels forward and then backward
 - Heel to toe walk forward and then backward
 - Once the above exercises are mastered try performing the same exercises with your eyes closed

- Practice with a bouncing ball:
 - Practice bouncing a ball on the floor with your right hand 10 times
 - Practice bouncing a ball on the floor with your left hand 10 times
 - Practice tossing a ball against the wall, to floor, then catch with both hands 10 times

5.) Sitting/Bending

- While sitting, shrug shoulders 20 times. Turn shoulders to the right, then to the left 20 times. Bend forward and pick up objects from the ground and sit up, 20 times.

6.) Standing

- Change from a sitting to standing position, and back again, 20 times. Do this initially with eyes open. As balance improves, do this with eyes closed (but only if you have a partner to help you). Throw a small rubber ball (or similar object) from hand to hand above eye level. Throw the object from hand to hand under one knee.

Other Activities to Improve Balance

Recreational activities can be excellent for vestibular rehabilitation. In general, activities should involve using the eyes while the head and body are in motion. Of course, many avocational activities require this -- golf, bowling, tennis, racquetball, ping-pong, etc. The trick is to find one that is fun, safe, and somewhat stimulating. Just walking around the block looking from side to side may be a useful activity. Martial arts activities are also beneficial, as long as physical injury is avoided.

"Alternative" balance activities. Yoga, Tai Chi, and martial arts are the activities that have been considered in the literature. Tai Chi and Yoga both incorporate some relaxation which may be helpful for those who have anxiety accompanying their dizziness or imbalance. These activities are intrinsically lower in cost than individualized therapy, but their efficacy has not been compared in a head-on fashion to individualized therapy. They are probably most appropriate for those who have "graduated" from individual physical therapy.

Hain, TC. <http://www.dizziness-and-hearing.com>. 27 Dec 2006 <<http://www.dizziness-and-balance.com/images/master-ear.jpg>>.

MEI: Michigan Ear Institute, P.L.L.C. <http://www.michiganear.com>. 2000. <http://www.michiganear.com/library/B/balanceexercises.html>.