

Physical Therapy for Vestibular Hypofunction

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A vestibular hypofunction involves diminished inner ear functioning in either one or both ears, according to the Vestibular Disorders Association. Physical therapy, known as vestibular rehabilitation, involves retraining the brain to compensate for inner ear deficits through specific exercises involving the eyes, body and head, with the intent on coordinating information between the visual field and cognitive field. Not all therapy maneuvers may be suitable for your individual condition. Check with your doctor first, since therapy is very individualized and specific.

Walking

Increasing your overall general fitness plays a key role in properly recuperating from any vestibular disorder, according to the Vestibular Disorders Association. The healthier you are, the higher your success rate with a balance-retraining program. Physical therapy for a vestibular hypofunction needs to include some low-impact activities, such as walking, to improve overall fitness levels. Start walking at a comfortable pace for five minutes daily. Walk with a partner if you are uncomfortable walking alone. Remember to wear well-fitted, comfortable shoes to prevent injury. As you become stronger, gradually increase your duration and speed.

Head Turns

After your doctor has determined that your loss of balance or dizziness is caused by a vestibular disorder such as hypofunction, do some at-home exercises utilizing vestibular compensation. If your dizziness occurs when turning your head to the right, do a physical therapy exercise using this knowledge, according to the Vestibular Disorders Association. Sit upright in a firm chair, feet firmly planted on the floor. Hold onto a table or other firm surface for balance and support. Quickly turn your head to the right, keeping your eyes open. Hold this position until you are not dizzy. Turn your head back to the center position. Hold this position until you are not dizzy. Relax 15 seconds. Repeat this exercise five times daily.

Tai Chi

Tai Chi can both improve your sense of balance and general fitness in a slow, relaxed manner. This ancient art helps recalibrate sensory and motor functions needed for good balance, the same goal of vestibular rehabilitation therapy. Tai Chi promotes body and movement awareness while also improving posture. One movement you can do is known as holding the ball. Stand with your feet firmly planted on the floor and gently bend your knees. Imagine a life force coming from your center body. Slowly lift your arms and place your lower arm on the bottom part of the ball, with your palms and forearms facing upward. Slowly lift your other arm and place it on top of the ball, palms facing downward. Gently take a step to your right while holding the ball. Hold this position for eight seconds. Slowly walk back to your original position. Lower your arms to the original position. Relax 10 seconds. Repeat this exercise to your left.

Leg Strengthening

Balance improvement plays a major role in any physical therapy for a vestibular hypofunction because it gives you more control of your body positioning. Better body positioning can lower risks of falling or tripping, according to the National Institute on Aging. Work on your balance by strengthening your leg muscles by doing a standing leg raise. Find a sturdy chair and stand facing the back of it. Hold onto the chair for support purposes. Inhale slowly. Slowly exhale and lift your right foot from the floor. Move your leg behind your body without bending your knee or back. Hold this position three seconds. Slowly lower your leg to the original position. Relax 10 seconds. Repeat this exercise 10 times. Do the exercise again using your left leg.