

MANAGING DIZZINESS

Following Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence



WHAT IS DIZZINESS?

Dizziness is a term used to describe everything from feeling faint or lightheaded to feeling weak or unsteady. The room may seem to spin (also known as vertigo) or you may feel off-balance, as if you are about to fall. Symptoms can come on suddenly or may be caused by movements such as turning your head. Dizziness can last for seconds to minutes or longer.

WHY AM I FEELING DIZZY AFTER CONCUSSION?

During a concussion, the system that controls your balance (vestibular system) may be affected. This system is made up of areas of the inner ear and brain that provide information about motion, head position and spatial direction. It also helps you stabilize your head and body during movement. If injury affects any part of this complex system, you can experience dizziness or unsteadiness. Sometimes, there are other reasons you can feel dizzy after a concussion, such as from headaches, neck injuries, anxiety or medication side-effects.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM EXPERIENCING DIZZINESS AFTER CONCUSSION?

Many people experience dizziness during the first 1–2 weeks after concussion. However, it usually resolves on its own without the need for treatment. If your symptoms continue, speak to your primary health care provider so they can determine the cause and recommend a treatment plan. They may also refer you to other health care professionals that specialize in dizziness, such as an audiologist, otolaryngologist (ENT), physical therapist, occupational therapist or neurologist.

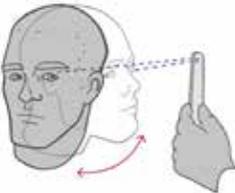
WHAT CAN I DO TO MAINTAIN MY SAFETY WHEN I AM FEELING DIZZY?

One of the concerns is the tendency to fall when feeling dizzy or lightheaded. Here are some tips you can use to help keep yourself safe:

- Have someone else drive for you if you experience frequent dizziness or lightheadedness
- Steady yourself by holding on to something when making sudden movements or bending over
- Use good lighting when walking around your house at night
- When getting out of bed, sit for a few minutes before standing or walking

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP RELIEVE MY DIZZINESS SYMPTOMS?

Many dizziness symptoms after a concussion can be helped by vestibular rehabilitation therapy, a group of specialized exercises that allow your eyes, inner ear and brain to adjust after injury. Speak with your primary health care provider before starting these exercises to ensure that they are safe for you. Keep in mind that your symptoms may temporarily increase when doing these exercises, however, they should resolve within a minute after completing each set. If your symptoms do not resolve after a minute, stop the exercise and try again the next day.

| Exercise | Frequency <i>To be completed by health care provider</i> | Description | Instructions | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Balance Exercises | _____ sets _____ repetitions _____ times daily | These exercises are aimed at strengthening your general balance to help with dizziness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin standing with your back to a corner for safety ● Place your feet together and your arms across your chest ● Keep your eyes open ● Turn your head LEFT to RIGHT while maintaining your balance |  |
| Canalith Repositioning | _____ sets _____ repetitions _____ times daily | These maneuvers are used to treat a specific type of dizziness known as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV). BPPV is caused when crystals in the inner ear move away from their normal place. These maneuvers can help move the crystals back to their correct part in the ear. | If your primary health care provider recommends that you practice these exercises, they will provide you with TBICoE's detailed instructions to use at home. |  |
| Gaze Stabilization | _____ sets _____ repetitions _____ times daily | These exercises work on improving vision and the ability to focus on a stationary object while your head is moving. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin seated in a comfortable chair ● Hold a target (such as a Popsicle stick) in front of you at arm's length ● Turn your head LEFT and RIGHT while keeping your eyes fixed on the target ● Speed is important! Pick a speed where it just starts to become difficult to keep the target in focus |  |
| Vestibular Habituation | _____ sets _____ repetitions _____ times daily | These exercises work by gradually training your brain to tolerate the confusing signals coming from your inner ear by repeatedly practicing movements that produce symptoms. The goal is to train your brain to get used to busy visual scenes and quick head movements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin by walking in a hallway ● Turn your head to the left or right with every third step ● Try to maintain a straight path down the hall while your head is turned ● When you reach the end of the hallway, turn around and repeat |  |



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Hearing Center of Excellence: hearing.health.mil. Offers information about the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, rehabilitation and research for hearing loss and auditory injury in service members and veterans.

Do you have questions about this fact sheet? Feedback? Email dha.TBICoEinfo@mail.mil.