

Modified Cawthorne-Cooksey exercises

The balance organs of the two ears work together, sending equal impulses to the brain. They are essential for the maintenance of balance of the head and body. Damage to one of the balance centres causes vertigo or dizziness, which is often accompanied by unsteadiness, nausea and vomiting. Although this condition may be very frightening, it is not usually serious or life-threatening.

The purpose of the exercises is to build up a tolerance mechanism in the brain that compensates for the imbalance between the two ears. Frequent repetition of the exercises will usually lead to more rapid improvement in the dizziness and impaired balance.

The exercises should be carried out persistently for a total of at least 5 minutes, 3 times daily and for as long as the symptoms persist. This may be for up to 3 months.

You should not try to perform all the exercises at once. Rather, you should perform a group of exercises at a time, starting at the top of the list. You should concentrate on performing only the exercises that cause dizziness. When you can perform a particular section of exercises without feeling dizzy, you should proceed to the next group down the page.

Certain medications may be taken to control any nausea during the initial stages of the exercise therapy, but prolonged use of these medications should be avoided.

Early return to exercise and sporting activities is also an important part of treatment.

Sitting

1. Eye movements—at first slowly, then quickly:
 - up and down
 - from side to side
 - focus on finger with arm extended and slowly move finger towards face until vision starts to blur.
2. Head movements—at first slowly, then quickly (later with eyes closed):
 - bend forward and backward
 - turn from side to side.
3. Bend forward and pick up objects from the ground.

Standing

1. Follow steps 1 to 3 described above while standing.
2. Change from sitting to standing position with eyes open and shut.
3. Throw a small ball from hand to hand (above eye level).
4. Change from sitting to standing position and make a full turn in between.

Moving about

1. Circle around a centre person who will throw a ball back and forth.
2. Walk across a room with eyes open and then closed.
3. Walk up and down a slope with eyes open and then closed.
4. Walk up and down steps with eyes open and then closed.
5. Any game involving bending, stretching and aiming such as tennis, bowls or basketball.

Doctor's contact details:

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