



Balance exercises

This leaflet explains exercises to help with your balance problems.

Introduction

- **It is very important that you carry out the exercises at a speed or level of difficulty that just starts to provoke a sensation of imbalance.** If you do the exercises so slowly that you feel nothing then you will not benefit. Neither will you benefit if you do them so quickly, or at such a level of difficulty that the sensations are too strong. You will overwhelm the system in this way.
- Bear in mind the number of repetitions of the exercise you have been asked to do.
- **In between each repetition of each exercise, it is important to let your symptoms subside completely.** This may take a different amount of time for each exercise and vary from day to day, but should take no longer than couple of minutes. It is a good idea to sit yourself down, take some slow breaths and shrug your shoulders to help you relax.
- As the exercises become easier you need to increase the level of their difficulty so as to continue to provoke the 'imbalance sensations' necessary for the exercises to work. This will be shown to you at your second appointment and more details are given at the end of this handout.
- **Aim to do the exercises in order for as long as it takes to complete your programme as many times per day as requested.** Try and set aside time during your day to do the exercise programme. If you feel too unwell to do them, do not worry. Just continue with them as soon as you feel better.
- It is sensible to do them with someone else watching you, if possible. If this is difficult then try and **ensure your own safety** by doing them in an area where you may be supported if you became unsteady, for example in the corner of a room. Try and find a space that is free from hazards such as sharp objects, to avoid injury should you fall.
- Stop and rest if you feel you have had enough of an exercise. Take things a little slower if you find it too much to start with. For example, just concentrate on one of the exercises or do them for a shorter amount of time.
- **You must stop if any of the exercises cause you neck or back pain, severe dizziness, chest pain, fainting or a change in your hearing or tinnitus.**

If you have any concerns about your exercises or your balance, then please phone the Balance Team in the Audiology Department on 0118 322 7238.

Balance exercises description

Eye and head movements:

Safety – if done sitting, exercises should be carried out seated in a good supportive chair with arms. If done standing, then do the exercises in an area where you may be supported if you become unsteady, for example in the corner of a room.



Exercise 1

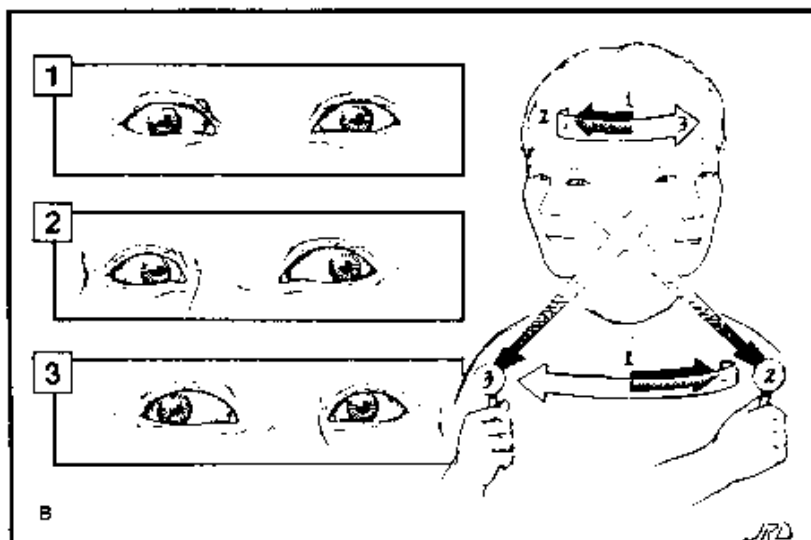
- Keep your head still.
- Focus on a pen which you move slowly left and right.

Exercise 2

- Turn your head slowly from left to right, whilst focusing on a letter written on a card stuck to the wall.
- Perform this exercise at a level just below where the letter just begins to jump.

Exercise 3 (see diagram)

- Turn your head in one direction, whilst focusing on a letter moving in the opposite direction at a level **just below** where the letter just begins to jump.



Exercise 4

- Turn your head gently to the left and the right.

Exercise 5

- Nod your head gently.

Where people go wrong

- The head movement is jerky and not symmetrical and smooth; this may hurt your neck.
- The head movement is too large and people look out of the corners of their eyes or are unable to see the target at all.
- The head is tilted right and left, rather than a horizontal head movement.
- The exercise is done too quickly, so the full time is not completed. It is better to do the full time at a slower speed.
- For exercise 3, people start to move the target and their head in the same direction.

Body movements:

Exercise 6

- Make one revolution of a circle taking small steps

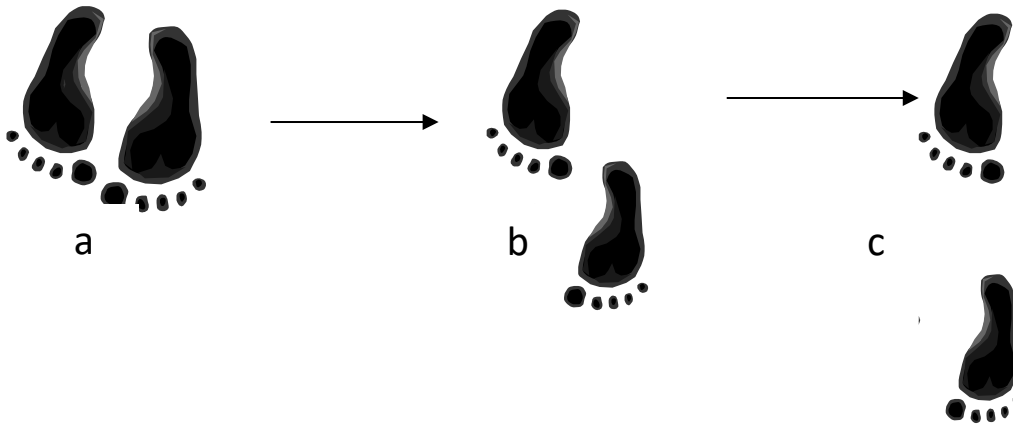
Standing balance:

Safety – carry out the exercises below in the corner of a room, with a stable chair in front of you.



Exercise 7

- Stand with feet in position a/b/c on a hard surface, folded blanket, thin cushion, thick cushion.



Walking balance:

Safety – perform along a corridor in your house so you have the walls there for stability.



Exercise 8

- Walk slowly down a corridor with your eyes open/closed (with good posture).
- Turn to face the opposite direction and stop (open eyes if closed before turn).

Exercise 9

- Walk slowly down a corridor with a slow head turn.
- Walk slowly down a corridor with a slow head nod.

Where people go wrong

- People walk very stiffly with their head still or looking down and without swinging their arms.
- People turn their bodies rather than head in exercise 9.
- People perform the head movements too quickly (usually in time with their stride), which makes them feel very unsteady.

Other exercises:

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Your progress

You may find it useful to make a table of when you do the exercises and how you progress. An example for you to use in the first two weeks is shown below. Remember, you may not have to make the exercises harder in this time.

Exercises

Progression

Exercise number					
Date of progression					
How progressed					

Questions to ask clinician at next appointment:

How to make exercises harder:

You will have been performing the exercises at a level, which just starts to provoke mild symptoms of dizziness or imbalance. When the exercises no longer evoke such symptoms, you need to make the exercise more challenging so that they continue to be effective.

General principles:

- Eyes closed is harder than eyes open.
- Quicker movements are harder than slower ones.
- Doing more repetitions is harder than less repetitions.
- Standing is harder than sitting.
- Narrower base of support whilst standing is harder than feet apart.
- Soft or uneven surface is harder than hard surface.

Eye and head movements

- Gradually increase the speed of movement – make sure to keep the letter in focus at all times.
- For a harder exercise try with the letter against a chequered/stripy/busy background.
- For head turn/nod with your eyes open, do the exercise with eyes closed – you will need to do this at a slower rate than you were doing with eyes open as this is harder.
- Increase the number of movements within a single repetition.
- Increase number of repetitions of exercise.
- If you have been doing the exercise sitting down, try it standing with your feet apart.

Body movements

- Increase speed, for example rotate faster.
- Do two rotations in a row.
- Perform more slowly with eyes closed.
- Do more repetitions.

Standing exercises

- Increase the thickness of the soft surface.
- Move your feet closer together or try heel to toe (or as near as you can).
- Increase time of standing.
- Do with eyes closed – to begin with, you will need to put your feet wider apart than you did with eyes open.

Walking balance

- Increase the speed on the walk and head turn/nod.
- Walk on a softer surface.
- Walk whilst counting backwards/other mental alerting task.

Contact details:

If you have any concerns or need further advice about your exercises or your balance, then contact the Balance Team in the Audiology Department on Tel: 0118 322 7238

Email: audiology.royalberkshire@nhs.net

Website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/audiology

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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Next review due: January 2026.