

The Vestibular System has to do with our sense of balance and is for maintaining equilibrium. Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) is a special form of Physical Therapy designed to decrease dizzy symptoms and improve balance. This is accomplished by stimulating the brain to adjust to abnormalities of the vestibular system.

What is involved with Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT)?

- Exercises to help your eyes remain steady during head movements
- Exercises to help you tolerate head movement or position changes which cause dizziness
- Exercises to help your balance and walking to decrease your risk of falls
- Correcting your posture and help strengthen weak muscles to improve balance
- Education for prevention, maintenance and self-care of symptoms after discharge

What should I expect with VRT?

- An initial evaluation will be performed with Stephanie Ford, PT, to get a baseline of your symptoms and function and will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour.
- You will be seen once a week (twice weekly for more severe problems) for 45 minutes. Treatment can last 4-12 weeks depending on the severity of the problem.
- Stephanie will prescribe a specific Home Exercise Program (HEP) for you based on the results of the evaluation and your improvement over time. The HEP is designed to help your brain adapt to your vestibular system problem. It is important to consistently and regularly perform the exercises at home, in between appointments.
- Some exercises may initially make your symptoms worse, but symptoms will steadily improve as you perform them consistently.
- Many different factors contribute to your final level of recovery including: initial severity and type of injury to the vestibular system, consistency with performing the exercises at home, medical and physical condition prior to this problem, level of anxiety or depression, and headaches.
- Medications such as meclizine, Antivert, phenergan, or valium can slow your recovery by preventing your brain from adjusting to your vestibular system abnormality. Please consult your doctor regarding weaning off of these medications as soon as you can.
- Once VRT is complete, it will be important to continue with the HEP designed for you by Stephanie. Relapse of symptoms, known as “decompensation”, can occur in times of stress, fatigue or illness. By performing the exercises regularly, you can avoid this.