

MANAGING DIZZINESS AFTER A CONCUSSION



Dizziness can sometime last a long time after a concussion/head injury. It can be described as the room spinning or moving, the sensation that your body is moving, or a general feeling of unbalance.

WHAT CAUSES THIS DIZZINESS?

There are several different reasons for dizziness.

The brain receives information about dizziness from;

1. Your inner ear (the vestibular system), and
2. Special nerves in the joints and muscles in your neck

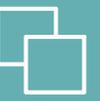
Your brain uses this information so you know what position your body is in, and how you are moving. This helps to keep you balance. Sometimes the signals going to the brain are or the way the brain understands these signals get confused and mixed up. Often simple things can help your brain interpret these signals better.

GENERAL ADVICE

- Make a note of things that make the dizziness worse. Don't completely avoid these things but just be aware of them and continue to try them.
- Be cautious with activities that may be potentially unsafe due to the dizziness. eg. driving a car, riding a bike.
- Don't return to contact sports or sports at height (such as rock climbing or aerial gymnastics) until your dizziness has resolved or you get medical clearance from a doctor.



OTHER TIPS TO MANAGE YOUR DIZZINESS



1. Stand up slowly. Some people get dizzy when they stand up and may feel "faint". Often this is easily managed by drinking more water and standing up more slowly. If this continues you may need to see your GP to have your blood pressure checked.
2. Keep active. Too much rest is not a good thing. Just like a muscle will get weak if it doesn't keep working, your brain needs your body to move to help it recover. Normal movement and activity will help the brain and body heal by keeping the communication pathways open and reminding the brain what is normal! Even if you don't feel like playing sport, do some fun things outside such as walking, running and playing friendly games with friends and family.
3. Keep moving your head. Gently challenge your body, head, neck, and eyes to move in a variety of ways. Some everyday ways to do this are household chores such as unstacking the dishwasher or making your bed, bending forwards, tying shoe laces, and reaching to get an object off a high shelf.
4. Eye exercises. At first, do these exercises slowly for several minutes. Then increase the speed and time until you can do them for 5 minutes.
 - look at a spot on the wall while moving your head from side-to-side
 - while sitting, hold a book in front of you, focus on a particular word, then move the book slowly towards then away from you while continuing to focus on this word
 - "Pencil push-ups" Hold a pencil at arm's length and focus on the tip. Move the pencil slowly towards you while focusing on the tip until it becomes blurry. Then move it slowly out again and repeat. You can do this easily at school in a break.
5. Balance exercises: these help your brain focus on the feedback from nerves in your body .Stand near a table or wall if you are worried you might fall. Don't worry if you overbalance; just return to the starting position and try again. You will improve!
 - stand on one leg for 60 seconds
 - stand on one leg, throw a ball against a wall, then catch it. Do this for 2 minutes.
 - stand on one leg, and close your eyes for 60 seconds. This is more difficult!
6. Don't let your neck get stiff. Keep your neck moving normally.eg. turning to talk to a friend or looking in an upwards direction.

PHYSIOTHERAPY

A physiotherapist can further help with your issues by assessing exactly what part of your brain, inner ear, or neck is causing problems. Specific exercises and 'hands-on' therapy to the neck may be prescribed. See a physiotherapist soon after your injury if you have neck pain, or if your dizziness doesn't resolve after four weeks.