

# Understanding Balance

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is balance?

A properly **functioning balance system** allows a person to see clearly while moving, identify orientation with respect to gravity, determine direction of speed and movement, and make automatic body adjustments to maintain posture and stability in various conditions and activities. This is all done automatically for us without even thinking about it. If, however, the balance system is not properly functioning a person will have to make adjustments and this does not always work.

### 2. How does the body maintain balance?

Your sense of balance is maintained by a complex interaction of the following parts: **Vision** (Oculomotor and Vestibular System), **Proprioception** (touch sensors in feet, body, and spine that tells your body which position it is in) and **Central Nervous System** (the process center of the body).

### 3. What is the difference between dizziness, vertigo, and disequilibrium?

Dizziness is a sensation of lightheadedness, faintness, or unsteadiness; Vertigo has a rotational, spinning component, and is the perception of movement, either of the self or surrounding objects; Disequilibrium simply means unsteadiness, imbalance, or loss of equilibrium.

### 4. How do my ears affect balance?

Your ears are made up of 3 parts:

- a) The Outer Ear
- b) The Middle Ear (where fluid can accumulate resulting in bacterial infection)
- c) The Inner Ear (The organ of hearing and balance) = The Vestibular Apparatus is housed here.

\*If the Vestibular Apparatus is not functioning properly balance difficulties can result.

### 5. What Causes Vestibular Disorders:

Vestibular Disorders can be the result of illness and/or damage to the inner ear. Ear infection, head injury, aging, and viral infection are most commonly the causes. Migraines, allergies and other illnesses, as well as genetic and environmental factors may contribute.



## **6. Can a Physical Therapist help?**

If you have Vertigo due to an Inner Ear problem then absolutely! The Physician can refer you to the Balance Center at Cape Regional Physical Therapy for a balance test or a Physical Therapy Evaluation. For further information, evaluation, or to discuss treatment options please call Cape Regional Physical Therapy at 609-536-4995.

Cape Regional PT: Cape Regional Medical Commons, 223 N. Main Street Suite 102 Cape May Court House NJ 08210. Telephone: 609-536-4995

Cape Regional PT: Cedar Square Shopping Center, 2087 Route 9, Seaville NJ 08230. Telephone: 609-624-2030

*This information was compiled from: Vestibular Disorders Association (VEDA). Submitted by Ginger Millar, Cape Regional Physical Therapy.*