



VESTIBULAR

DISORDERS ASSOCIATION

Balance Awareness Week

September 15th – 21st, 2014

10 Things You Didn't Know About the Balance (Vestibular) System

1. The word "vestibular" refers to the inner-ear balance system. To achieve good physical balance we rely on our brain, eyes, inner-ear, and muscular-skeletal system to work in harmony. Healthy people usually take balance for granted until it is impaired.
2. Over 35% of US adults aged 40 years and older (69 million Americans) have had vestibular dysfunction at some point in their lives.
3. Balance problems can occur from inner-ear disease, a virus, a traumatic brain injury, poisoning by certain substances, autoimmune causes, migraines, and aging.
4. People with vestibular disorders can have any or all of the following symptoms: vertigo (spinning sensation), dizziness, fatigue, jumping vision, unsteadiness, cognitive difficulties, anxiety, nausea/vomiting, hearing loss, and ringing in the ears (tinnitus).
5. Balance disorders are an invisible chronic illness – invisible because they can't be seen by the casual observer and chronic because they may or may not get better. They are difficult to diagnose and treat, and because others can't "see" the outward signs they may assume the patient is overreacting or faking their symptoms, which can cause the patient to become isolated and depressed.
6. People with vestibular disorders can suffer cognitive impacts, such as poor concentration, memory, and word recall; difficulty reading while tracking printed text; and impaired mental stamina. They may also develop anxiety due to the constant fear of having a vertigo attack.
7. There are many different triggers that can cause or exacerbate vestibular disorders, such as stress, a high sodium diet, certain head positions, and changes in barometric pressure.
8. Some vestibular disorders are disabling due to their physical and cognitive impacts, resulting in loss of work and livelihood, and sometimes affecting a patient's personal relationships.
9. Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) has consistently been shown to be an important part of the management of vestibular patients. Research by UTMB (2000) shows that most studies state that patients who use VRT improve by 70-80%.
10. A support group can provide helpful information and support. To find a vestibular disorders support group in your area visit VEDA's website at https://vestibular.org/support_groups.

To learn more about vestibular disorders, visit vestibular.org or call (800) 837-8428.