



VESTIBULAR

DISORDERS ASSOCIATION

Balance Awareness Week

September 16th – 22nd, 2012

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 antibiotics (ototoxicity), 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, "brain fog", nausea/vomiting, hearing loss, and ringing in the ears (tinnitus).
5. 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.
6. 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%.
7. Some low-impact exercise routines can help improve balance, such as Tai Chi or use of the Wii video game console in conjunction with the Wii Balance Board.
8. 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.
9. Some of the early research on the vestibular system came from NASA's study on returning astronauts in the space program.
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 <http://vestibular.org/finding-help-support/support-directory>.

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