

Physical Therapy for Vertigo/Dizziness after Stroke

Balance, vertigo and dizziness issues are common after stroke. In many cases, vestibular rehabilitation performed by a [specially trained physical therapist](#) can help.

The Vestibular System

Many people are not familiar with the body's vestibular (equilibrium) system. The vestibular part of the inner ear sends information to the brain about head tilt and movement. Parts of the brain are then responsible for using this information to keep vision stable when the head is moving or tilting, and for generating balance reactions.

When the vestibular system is damaged by a stroke or other illness or injury, a person can be left with one or more of the following:

- [Vertigo](#)
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Balance issues
- Trouble focusing
- Vision issues
- Other problems

Vertigo, Dizziness After Stroke Could be a Vestibular Problem

About 40 percent of patients who come to WakeMed Rehabilitation after a stroke need some type of vestibular physical therapy to overcome feelings of imbalance, vertigo and/or general dizziness.

It's understandable when you consider the fact that good balance depends on the brain, eyes and body working together. A stroke affects the brain. Therefore, the brain-eye-body connections are often disrupted, and dizziness can occur.

Vestibular disorders are prevalent after stroke, but they are sometimes overlooked. It's easy to understand. Stroke side effects such as speech/language issues ([aphasia](#), etc.), limited mobility and the inability to use the affected hand and/or arm are much more obvious and require an immediate start to therapy to help the patient regain as much independence and ability as possible. In addition, balance issues may first be attributed to weakness – not a vestibular disorder.

Feeling off Balance? Ask for a PT Evaluation

WakeMed Rehab's physical therapists who specialize in vestibular rehabilitation can evaluate patients who have had strokes to determine if a vestibular issue is causing feelings of dizziness and vertigo. We welcome patients at all points of their recovery because we work with patients in all of the following settings:

- WakeMed Raleigh Campus, Cary, and North Raleigh Hospitals

- WakeMed Rehabilitation Hospital at Raleigh Campus
- Several of our WakeMed Outpatient Rehab locations

If you or a loved one feels dizzy or off balance after a stroke, ask the doctor for a referral for a vestibular physical therapy evaluation. We can come to your bedside or see you at one of our outpatient practices.

During the evaluation, we talk to patients about their symptoms, medications, other medical conditions, vision issues and other factors that may contribute to feelings of dizziness and vertigo. We then perform a detailed examination to determine the specific problems a patient is having. Treatment can involve some simple movements and/or exercises depending on our physical therapy diagnosis. In some cases, patients find relief from the symptoms after one visit with us, black while others need a more comprehensive treatment plan to feel better.

Feelings of vertigo, dizziness and being off balance can have a negative impact on your quality of life. Chances are, there's a solution. Talk to your doctor about a referral to a WakeMed Rehabilitation physical therapist who specializes in treating vestibular problems.

About the Author(s)

This post was written in collaboration with: Dana Thomas, MS, PT; Lauren Moennich, PT, DPT; and Leslie Humphries, PT, DPT.

Leslie Humphries, PT, DPT; Lauren Espe Moennich, PT, DPT; and Dana B. Thomas, MS, PT are WakeMed physical therapists who specialize in treating vestibular issues. Patients and providers are welcome to call [919-350-7000](tel:919-350-7000) to schedule appointments.