

Patient information

Cawthorne-Cooksey exercises

Instructions for patients

The balance parts of the two ears complement each other by sending equal impulses to the brain which are essential for the maintenance of equilibrium of the head and body.

If either or both balance centres are damaged, equilibrium is upset. The result of this is vertigo or giddiness, which may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Although this condition may be very frightening it is not serious, in that it does not, in itself, threaten life. It can, in many cases, be overcome by carrying out these special exercises.

The purpose of these exercises is to build up a tolerance mechanism and the more diligently and regularly they are carried out, the sooner the symptoms will disappear.

The exercises should be performed three times each day.

Begin with exercise 1A. This should be performed in three sets of five, three times a day. Grade the severity of your symptoms as you do this exercise, using the following scale:

- 0 symptom free
- 1 mild discomfort
- 2 discomfort
- 3 severe

Only when the symptoms clear, or after two weeks, move on to the next exercise 1B.

A conscious effort should be made to seek out the head positions and movement that cause vertigo as far as can be tolerated, because the more frequently vertigo is induced the more quickly the brain compensation mechanism builds up.

You may have been prescribed medication to ease your symptoms and should continue with these while on this exercise programme.

Exercises

A In bed

- 1 Eye movements: at first slow, then quick
 - a) up and down
 - b) from side to side
 - c) focus on finger moving from 3ft to 1ft away from face
- 2 Head movements: at first slow, then quick. Later with eyes closed.
 - a) bend backwards and forwards
 - b) turn from side to side

B Sitting

- 1 and 2 - as above
- 3 Shoulder shrugging and circling
- 4 Bend forward and pick up objects from the ground

A Standing

- 1 As A1, A2 and B3
- 2 Change from sitting to standing with eyes open, then eyes closed
- 3 Throw a small ball from hand to hand (above eye level)
- 4 Throw a ball from hand to hand under the knee
- 5 Change from sitting to standing and turn round in between

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<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>

