

BalanceMD Bulletin

Your guide to the latest developments in vestibular medicine and hearing health

Meet our Team



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Welcome to the BalanceMD Bulletin

When it comes to the symptoms of dizziness, vertigo, imbalance and hearing loss, BalanceMD is here to serve you and your patients by providing the most cost-effective and accurate diagnosis and treatment.

Our newsletters are meant to be informational on the latest developments in vestibular medicine, so as to improve patient care and outcomes for the symptoms of dizziness, vertigo, imbalance and hearing loss.

Some Vestibular Disorders Are Treated Without Medication

BPPV (Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo)

Aging naturally causes the onset of maladies, hearing loss being one of the most common. However, balance is another area of our health which can be affected with age. Problems with equilibrium and sense of balance can contribute to injury related falls and can also negatively impact emotions related to feelings of independence and confidence. Chronic balance disorders affect nearly eight million people in the United States.

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is a common condition which causes dizziness. BPPV occurs when small calcium carbonate crystals in the inner ear break loose and migrate into a fluid-filled tube called the semicircular canal. Changes in head position result in movement of these crystals in the canals resulting in the brief (10-15 seconds) sensation of vertigo. A characteristic nystagmus also occurs, coinciding with vertigo, which is best visualized by infrared video goggles. Vertigo of BPPV is commonly triggered by lying down, rolling over or getting up from bed, and looking up or down. **Although BPPV is a common condition, it is over-diagnosed.** There is a long list of other conditions which might cause positional vertigo symptoms.



Infrared Video Goggles

Unfortunately, many people with BPPV remain untreated or are prescribed meclizine (Antivert) even though we now have ways to cure this condition within only a few minutes. This cure is known as a Canalith Repositioning Procedure (CRP). The type of CRP needed depends on which semicircular canal is affected - the "Epley" or "Semont" maneuver if the posterior canal is affected, the "Lempert" roll if the horizontal canal is involved. A "headshake" procedure is effective in cases where the crystals are stuck to a membrane (cupula) in the semicircular canal, rather than free floating, a condition known as cupulolithiasis. These CRPs use gravity to move the patient's loose crystals from the semicircular canal back to the inner ear chamber where they originated, where they can be dissolved. **Canalith Repositioning results in an instant 92% cure rate.** So, if vertigo symptoms are not quickly cured by a CRP, BPPV may not be the correct diagnosis. At BalanceMD, we utilize infrared video goggles to best aid in observing the characteristic nystagmus of all types of BPPV provoked by head positioning to most accurately identify BPPV and we perform hundreds of CRPs each year. In addition to Dr. Sanders, our Audiologists and Physical Therapist, who have decades of experience in vestibular disorders, are well versed in recognizing and treating all types of BPPV. (over)

Other conditions that cause BPPV-like symptoms

- orthostatic hypotension
- low blood sugar
- anxiety
- overheating and dehydration
- inner ear disorders
- medications
- Low iron (anemia)
- Migraine

VRT is most successful when using a therapist with advanced training and experience.



Stephanie Ford, PT, is a Herdman Certified Vestibular Therapist working at both of our office locations.

The benefits from CRPs are immeasurable. Regaining sense of balance and shedding the fears of vertigo will enable patients to live without restriction and worry less about a painful fall. Good balance is important to maintain independence and daily routines, especially with aging.

Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy

Some causes of dizziness, vertigo and imbalance can be treated by physical therapy (PT) alone. This type of PT is called Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT), and it has been proven effective through decades of scientific research and positive patient outcomes. However, only a minority of patients with dizziness, perhaps 15%, benefit from VRT, so it is quite important to **first determine the underlying cause of dizziness** to assess whether VRT is the most appropriate intervention.

VRT can treat vestibular (balance) system disorders caused by:

- A weak or damaged inner ear nerve
- Cervicogenic (neck-related) dizziness
- Imbalance with risk of falls due to visual motion sensitivity
- Neuropathy (reduced sensation in the feet)
- Age-related imbalance (often with a fear of falling)
- Multiple unrelated factors together causing imbalance

The focus of VRT is not particularly related to physical strength or endurance, but on the sensory brain and inner ear systems which control balance. The brain uses vision, vestibular (inner ear) and proprioception (sense of where your limbs are in space) to allow safe movement without falling.

Vestibular rehabilitation therapy helps the brain adapt to any weaknesses in these three systems and improves the use of these systems to decrease dizziness and improve balance and stability.

Vestibular rehabilitation therapy is a highly specialized area of physical therapy, requiring specific and extensive training in the field *beyond* physical therapy school. Most non-VRT therapists treat dizziness sporadically or not at all. The most successful vestibular therapists have had additional specialized training to understand balance disorders and stay current on the most recent advances in treatment.

With VRT, a typical patient is seen once a week for one to two months. After an examination and diagnosis of the cause of dizziness, a home exercise program is designed *based on* the underlying diagnosis to help with the specific symptoms. Once VRT is completed, it is important to continue the exercise program at home to maintain its benefits.

Our Mission is to cure or significantly improve dizziness, imbalance and hearing loss in the most patient-friendly and cost-effective manner possible. BalanceMD offers locations in Indianapolis and Lafayette where all "dizzy" patient needs can be met, utilizing only the most highly trained and knowledgeable healthcare providers working together, including physician, audiologist and physical therapist. We are proud to say that 91% of our patients experience a cure or significant improvement in symptoms.

For more information or the schedule an appointment call us
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