



Possible Symptoms of Vestibular Disorders

The vestibular system includes the parts of the inner ear and the brain that help control balance and eye movements. If the system is damaged by disease, aging, or injury, vestibular disorders can result. Symptoms may include vertigo, dizziness, and imbalance, among others.

The type and severity of vestibular disorder symptoms can vary considerably, and be frightening and difficult to describe. People affected by vestibular disorders may be perceived as inattentive, lazy, overly anxious, or seeking attention. They may have trouble reading or doing simple arithmetic. Functioning in the workplace, going to school, performing routine daily tasks, or just getting out of bed in the morning may be difficult.

The following is a list of symptoms that have been reported by people with vestibular disorders. Not all symptoms will be experienced by every person, and other symptoms are possible. An inner ear disorder may be present even in the absence of obvious or severe symptoms. It is important to note that most of these individual symptoms can also be caused by other unrelated conditions.

Vertigo and dizziness

- Spinning or whirling sensation; an illusion of the self or world moving

(vertigo)

- Lightheaded, floating, or rocking sensation (dizziness)
- Sensation of being heavily weighted or pulled in one direction

Balance and spatial orientation

- Imbalance, stumbling, difficulty walking straight or turning a corner
- Clumsiness or difficulty with coordination
- Difficulty maintaining straight posture; tendency to look downward to confirm the location of the ground
- Head may be held in a tilted position
- Tendency to touch or hold onto something when standing, or to touch or hold the head while seated
- Sensitivity to changes in walking surfaces or footwear
- Muscle and joint pain (due to difficulty balancing)

Vision

- Trouble focusing or tracking objects with the eyes; objects or words on a page seem to jump, bounce, float, blur, or may appear doubled.
- Discomfort from busy visual environments such as traffic, crowds, stores, and patterns
- Sensitivity to light, glare, and moving or flickering lights; fluorescent lights may be especially troublesome
- Tendency to focus on nearby objects;

increased discomfort when focusing at a distance

- Increased night blindness; difficulty walking in the dark
- Poor depth perception

Hearing

- Hearing loss; distorted or fluctuating hearing
- Tinnitus (ringing, roaring, buzzing, whooshing, or other noises in the ear)
- Sensitivity to loud noises or environments
- Sudden loud sounds may increase symptoms of vertigo, dizziness, or imbalance

Cognitive and psychological

- Difficulty concentrating and paying attention; easily distracted
- Forgetfulness and short-term memory lapses
- Confusion, disorientation, and difficulty comprehending directions or instructions
- Difficulty following speakers in conversations, meetings, etc., especially when there is background noise or movement

- Mental and/or physical fatigue out of proportion to activity
- Loss of self-reliance, self-confidence, and self-esteem
- Anxiety, panic
- Depression

Other

- Nausea or vomiting
- Sensation of being “hungover” or “seasick”
- Motion sickness
- Ear pain
- Sensation of fullness in the ears
- Headaches
- Slurred speech
- Sensitivity to pressure or temperature changes and wind currents

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