



The Dizzy Moms Club

Practical Coping Strategies

When Caring for Children and Teens on Dizzy Days



Living with a vestibular disorder comes with many challenges which can quickly come into focus when caring for a young person. Babies require constant attention, toddlers are always on the move, school-age children are keen to learn more about the world around them, and teenagers crave independence. Keeping up with the ever-changing demands is exhausting, even without feeling like the world is spinning.

This guide has been designed to address some of the specific challenges that come up when caring for someone throughout the varying stages of childhood. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, step-parent, aunt, uncle, trusted friend or neighbour, if you live with a vestibular disorder and are tasked with caring for a child or teen, then this guide is for you.

This guide is broken down into sections to enable you find the help you need quickly:

- Below are two boxes with suggestions of things to prepare ahead of time, so they are available, or can help to keep things running more smoothly, when symptoms hit.
- The following pages are categorised according to the age of the child you are caring for: infants, toddlers, school-age kids, and teens. On these pages you will find some common challenges that arise with vestibular disorders and practical strategies and adjustments you can try.

Caring for children when living with vestibular dysfunction can be challenging, but with the right tools and strategies, it can still be rewarding.

STRATEGIES TO KEEP THINGS FUNCTIONING ON DIZZY DAYS

- Use a shared calendar with the other caregivers to reduce mental load
- Set alarms on your phone/watch for things like feeding/nap times, when to leave for school/activity drop-offs and pick-ups
- Create a visual schedule of tasks that occur on a daily/weekly basis (like laundry, library days, after-school activities, etc) to keep everyone on track
- Keep a visual checklist by the front door for daily essentials/backpack supplies
- Batch cook, or make double portions, of freezer meals to keep on hand for high-symptom days
- Build your 'village' - the people you know you can call on for help on the really tough days

CAREGIVING TOOLKIT SUGGESTIONS

- Create a list of activities you **can** do on dizzy days which you can easily refer to (e.g. on your phone)
- Prepare a box of quiet, non-triggering toys/activities which are kept only for high-symptom days (this also creates a feeling of novelty for the child)
- High-fidelity ear plugs
- Migraine/FL-41 glasses
- Long-handled grabber tool for picking things up
- Playlist of soothing sounds/guided meditations (e.g. Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer)
- Audiobooks/storytelling apps (Library apps like Overdrive, Libby and Borrowbox)
- A pre-prepared SOS message you can send when needing to ask for help

DISCLAIMER & MEDICAL SAFETY NOTE

This guide was created for educational purposes by members of The Dizzy Moms Club and is rooted entirely in shared, lived experiences. The practical tips and strategies provided are intended for peer support and general information only. They do not constitute professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Every individual's vestibular condition is unique; please always consult with your specialist, doctor, or medical team before introducing new tools, medications, or physical adjustments to your routine.

Caring for Infants (0-18 months)

Caring for very young children when you live with a vestibular disorder is particularly challenging. If you are a parent, you are likely contending with sleep deprivation. As a grandparent or caregiver, ever-changing nap schedules could be impacting the time you usually reserve for rest. Many classes designed for babies are especially triggering for those of us with vestibular sensitivities. Not to mention the movement required to care for very young children: rocking to sleep, bending up and down to pick up the baby, or the toys that they love to drop on the floor.

Here are some common challenges that arise with this age group and some practical solutions you can implement:

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES	COPING STRATEGIES
Unable to safely lift, carry, or walk with a baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move to the floor. - Have changing stations, toys which don't exacerbate symptoms, and snacks/feeding supplies accessible from floor-height. - Crawl if needed. - Create a safe and comfortable area with cushions and pillows to reduce the need to move around. - If your home is over more than one floor, have "dizzy-safe" stations on each floor/in each room you spend time with the child (e.g. a basket with changing supplies, non-perishable snacks, water, and a low-stimulation toy or book).
Feeding the baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a supportive floor chair, like a beanbag or gaming chair. - Instead of a traditional rocking chair, use a stable, comfy armchair.
Bending over to put baby into/out of cot/crib, pick up toys, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise height of cot/crib (if possible) to reduce amount of bending required. - Use a long-handled grabber tool for picking up toys, or other things that may fall to the floor. - When you do need to bend down, squat whilst keeping your head and gaze horizontal.
Rocking the baby to sleep or soothe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase a Rock-It device which attaches to the pram/stroller to simulate the rocking motion. - There are also cots/cribs with a built-in rocking function to soothe the baby to sleep.
Reading stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Switch to reading stories from memory or using audiobooks. The library provides access to audiobooks for free and meditation apps usually have a kids section with soothing bedtime stories.
Getting outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If symptoms allow, remember that using a pram/stroller provides additional stability. - Take your time and move at a pace you can manage. - Sunglasses and/or a wide-brimmed hat can help reduce visual overwhelm.
Overstimulation from crying baby	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in some high-fidelity earplugs that lower the volume of high-pitched crying while still allowing you to hear speech.
When symptoms are too severe to parent safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask for help. Keep a pre-written SOS message in your phone, such as "I am having a severe dizzy episode right now and I don't feel comfortable being alone with (the child(ren)). Please can you come over to help out for the next few hours?"

REMEMBER...

Your presence matters most to your baby.
Simply showing them love and affection is more than enough.

Caring for Toddlers/Pre-Schoolers (1-5 years)

Toddlers are highly-demanding individuals, who are constantly on the move, don't understand the risks that surround them, and cannot understand why others have limitations. At this stage, they also stop napping, reducing the available time you have to rest.

Here are some common challenges that arise with this age group and some practical solutions you can implement:

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES	COPING STRATEGIES
Unable to safely lift, carry, or walk with a toddler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move to the floor and have "dizzy-safe" stations (toys which don't exacerbate symptoms, snacks, and water accessible from floor-height) on each floor/in each room you spend time with the child. - Crawl if needed. - Create a safe and comfortable area with cushions and pillows to reduce the need to move around.
Playing with the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep noisy, flashing toys which can trigger or exacerbate symptoms for when others are caring for the child. - Be mindful of the toys you allow into your home. Ask friends and family members to gift low-stimulation toys to reduce overstimulation. - Play low-movement games like 'doctor' or 'spa' where it is the toddlers 'job' to take care of the caregiver. - Create a "child safe zone", like a large play-pen/enclosed area where the child can play safely whilst you rest nearby.
Bending over to pick up child, toys, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give the child an alternative: e.g. instead of being picked up, do they want to play with this toy or read a book. Distraction can be a very helpful technique! - Turn tidy-up time into a game. Set a timer and challenge the child to clear up the toys as quickly as possible. - If you do need to bend down, squat whilst keeping your head and gaze horizontal.
Reading stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read stories from memory or use audiobooks. Library and meditation apps have kids audiobooks and soothing bedtime stories. - Encourage the child to explain what is going on in the story to you!
Commuting to nursery / pre-school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When walking, use a pram/stroller to provide a third point of contact with the ground to increase stability. - If it is unsafe to drive, ask other parents if you can carpool for drop-off/pick-up.
Child no longer naps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain "quiet time" at the same time the child would have napped. This can take place in their room with low-stimulation activities and low lighting to encourage quiet and rest. Kids can look at books, colour in, play with legos, etc, whilst the caregiver can rest. Even better if the child can safely be left in their cot/crib for this time.
Loud sounds and noisy toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in some high-fidelity earplugs that lower the volume of high-pitched sounds while still allowing you to hear speech.
When symptoms are too severe to parent safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask for help. Keep a pre-written SOS message in your phone to be able to quickly reach out to someone for help.

REMEMBER...

Toddlers are demanding, but this intense phase is temporary.
You are doing a great job at a difficult time.

Caring for School-Aged Children (5-12 years)

Once children start school, a whole new set of challenges emerge. Now the child needs to be at school on time, might have homework or other after school activities, and birthday parties may become an almost-weekly occurrence. Not to mention the ever-increasing desire for your child to have more independence.

Here are some common challenges that arise with this age group and some practical solutions you can implement:

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES	COPING STRATEGIES
Communicating Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a “traffic light” system to let children/family members know how symptomatic you are and the cooperation you need. This could be magnets on the fridge or flashcards. E.g. Red = severe dizzy day and you need quiet; Yellow = slow day but functional; Green = low-symptom/good day.
Commuting to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If walking, encourage your child to check for when it is safe to cross the road, to reduce the number of repetitive head movements you need to make (and obviously do the final check before crossing!). - If it is unsafe to drive, ask other parents if you can carpool for drop-off/pick-up.
Snack prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare snack drawers, in the pantry for non-perishables and in the fridge for fruit and juice boxes, that the kids can access themselves.
Doing homework, using screens, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make adjustments to screens to make them easier to use. Dim the screen brightness and alter settings to reduce screen movements and motion on tablets/phones. - Consider using migraine glasses and/or earplugs and follow the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet into the distance for at least 20 seconds. - Use incentives for when homework is complete to encourage cooperation.
After school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set clear boundaries on what your family can manage, both physically and financially. - Be honest about what activities you can take them to, and whether you can observe the activity or not. - If attending, consider staying for a shorter time and find a quieter area to observe from. - If you can't make the event, ask someone attending to take photos and videos for you to look at with your child(ren) afterwards. - Carpool with other parents or take turns every other week to share the load.
Loud noises from screens / computer games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have your child wear headphones when playing games on a tablet/console. - Use high-fidelity earplugs to reduce sound sensitivity.
Birthday Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask the host in advance if parents are expected to stay or drop-off their child. - If attending, consider earplugs, migraine glasses and caps to reduce overstimulation. - If gift shopping is too difficult (both in-person and online), opt for a gift card instead. - Work with other caregivers/parents to coordinate drop-offs to parties, and offer to take the lead on those you can manage.
Reading stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have your child read to you! - When reading is challenging, listen to audiobooks together.
Maintaining connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask your child about their day. Spend time together playing games, listening to audiobooks or podcasts, and sharing hopes and dreams. Things you can do lying down in bed or on the move.
When symptoms are too severe to parent safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask for help from family and friends, even fellow parents. - Be honest with your child that you are having a bad day, but that you will be okay.
REMEMBER...	Children love to be helpful. By being honest about your limitations, you are teaching them lifelong empathy and understanding.

Caring for Teenagers (13-18 years)

Teenagers might be able to understand the challenges you have to manage when living with a vestibular disorder, but they still have needs and expectations of you as a parent. Finding ways to balance your needs as a chronically ill parent and their increasing desire for independence is tricky.

Here are some common challenges that arise with this age group and some practical solutions you can implement:

CHILDCARE CHALLENGES	COPING STRATEGIES
Driving to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If it is unsafe to drive, see if there are other parents who you can carpool with for drop-off/pick-up, or if there is a public transport option you can use on dizzy days.
Using screens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make adjustments to screens to make them easier to use. Dim the screen brightness and alter settings to reduce screen movements and motion on tablets/phones. - Consider using migraine glasses and/or earplugs and practice the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look 20 feet into the distance for at least 20 seconds.
After school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set clear boundaries on what your family can manage, both physically and financially. - Be honest about what activities you can take them to, and whether you can observe the activity or not. - If attending, consider staying for a shorter time and find a quieter area to observe from. - If you can't make the event, ask someone attending to take photos and videos for you to look at with your child(ren) afterwards. - Carpool with other parents or take turns every other week to share the load.
Loud noises from screens / computer games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have your child wear headphones when playing games on a tablet/console. - Use high-fidelity earplugs.
Social Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with your teen to come up with a back-up plan if it is unsafe for you to drive them. - Identify family social activities that you can manage and plan to do those together. - Explain that you are not stopping your teen from engaging in activities, but will need to sit some out because of your vestibular condition.
Maintaining connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find hobbies you both enjoy that you can do together. Low-stimulation activities can include cooperative or turn-taking games (board and digital), puzzles, or listening to audiobooks/podcasts together. - Find small ways to have moments of connection with your teen. Maybe you protect 15 minutes after school to check in with each other, or time in the evening to watch a show. - Remember that even when you need to lie down in a dark room, you can still listen to your teen and be there for them.
Encourage Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involving your teen in problem-solving issues which occur on dizzy days teaches them valuable life skills. - Consider assigning them tasks such as emptying the dishwasher or folding laundry whilst you discuss their day. - Using public transport, grocery shopping, and contributing to housework is preparation for adulthood and independent living.
When symptoms are too severe to parent safely	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be honest with your teen. Tell them that you are having severe symptoms and plans need to change. - Acknowledge their feelings of disappointment and remind them that it's not that you don't want to spend time with them, but that your body is not cooperating today. - Have trusted friends they can turn to for support on days when you need to rest

REMEMBER...

Teenagers rely on you for love and emotional support.
You can still provide a loving presence, even with limitations.