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OTOLARYNGOLOGY

SURGERY OF THE HEAD & NECK, FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY

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VERTIGO

The balance parts of the two ears send equal impulses to the brain which are essential for the maintenance of equilibrium of the head and neck.

If either or both balance centres are damaged, equilibrium is upset. The result of this is vertigo or dizziness 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, further, be overcome by carrying out special exercises.

The purpose of the exercises is to build up a tolerance mechanism in the brain which compensates for the unequal balance of the two ears. The exercises stimulate the development of this tolerance mechanism and the more diligently and regularly they are performed, the sooner will vertigo disappear. They will also help you to compensate for the fact that your balance organs have been damaged.

The exercises should be carried out persistently for at least 5 minutes three times daily and for as long as vertigo persists. This may be for one to three months. You should try to make the movements that cause vertigo as much as you can, because the more frequently vertigo is induced, the more quickly is the brain compensation mechanism built up. This helps your brain get used to the new situation.

Certain medications help to control the vertigo while brain compensation is being achieved. Any such tablets should be taken regularly during the course of exercises if your doctor has prescribed them for you.

Try to lead as normal a life as possible. Early return to work and sports are helpful in rehabilitation. Diligence and perseverance will be required, but the earlier and more regularly the balance exercise regimen is carried out the faster and more complete will be recovery to normal activity. You should be warned that your return to normal life may have to be gradual and will depend largely on your own ability to overcome this fatigue. However, your disabilities can be overcome with persistence and practice. The sooner you start the quicker and better will be the results.

REGIMEN OF HEAD EXERCISES

The Cawthorne/Cooksey system of exercises is designed to restore balance and to train the eyes and muscle and joint sense by performing many exercises with the eyes closed. It is important to relax during all the exercises. The movements are carried out in the following graduated stages:-

STAGE 1: Head Kept still - in Bed or Sitting

1. Look up and down and from side to side.
2. Focus on your finger at arm's length and then follow the finger as you move it to 1 ft. in front of your eyes.

STAGE 2: Head and Eye Movements While Sitting

1. Bend your head forward and then backwards, then from side to side, beginning slowly and then faster with your eyes open.
2. Repeat the whole exercise with your eyes closed.

STAGE 3: Head and Body Movements While Sitting

1. Practice shoulder shrugging and circling.
2. Pick an object up off the ground and lift it right up without taking your eyes off it.
3. Practice passing an object (such as a ball) from hand to hand under the knees.

STAGE 4: Standing Exercises

1. Try standing without support first with your eyes open and later closed.
2. Try turning around while standing.
3. Throw a large ball from hand to hand while standing.

STAGE 5: Moving About

1. Walk across the room and around a chair with your eyes open and then with your eyes closed.
2. Circle around a person while throwing a large ball back and forth between you.
3. Stand back to back with somebody. Pass a large ball between your legs and receive the ball back from them above the head. Try this as quickly as possible.
4. Walk up and down a slope with your eyes open and later closed.
5. Walk up and down steps with your eyes open and later closed.
6. Games involving stopping, stretching, and aiming, such as lawn bowling.