



## Basic Balance function

### How do people control their balance?

Balance is vital in carrying out everyday activities such as getting out of a chair, walking, putting the shopping away or bending down to put our shoes on. These activities are simple and are often taken for granted. Most of the time we don't even have to think about doing these activities. However, when a balance problem occurs it can affect a person significantly, causing huge disruptions to normal day to day life. As well as an increase in risk of falling, balance disorders can disrupt sleep patterns, affect a person's ability to carry on with their job, cause high levels of anxiety as well as many other effects.

The ability to balance is a complex process controlled by three things:

1. **Vestibular** – The movement of fluid in the balance canals sends signals to the brain.
2. **Visual** – Your eyes tell the brain where you are in relation to space
3. **Proprioception/ somatosensory information** – Your arms position, legs, joints and feet all relay information to the brain through their movement, position and touch.

We rely on our feet and joints to tell us if the surface we are standing on is uneven or moving. Our eyes tell the brain about the environment around us, if there are things moving around us or not. And the ears inform the brain if we are upright, leaning, lying down, moving or stationary.

The brain processes the information from all 3 of these inputs and this allows us to carry out all our normal daily activities.

Sometimes there is an interruption in the information from one of these inputs and this can trigger vertigo, dizziness or imbalance.

**Vertigo** – the perception of movement/spinning, either of self or the environment

**Dizziness** – generally a feeling such as a floaty sensation, lightheaded or feeling faint

**Imbalance** – feeling that you are off balance, unstable or going to fall

There are many causes for the interruption of this information and depending on the cause there are also specific treatments offered.

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact The Balance Team  
Secretary: 0121 424 3154

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