

Trauma and Inner Ear Problems

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Fact Sheet

Trauma and inner ear problems

Trauma, such as hitting your head in a fall or injuring your neck in a car accident, can also injure the inner ear structures. The peripheral vestibular system (located in the inner ear) plays a large role in balance. It helps you feel where you are in space relative to the ground. In addition, the inner ear system coordinates eyes and head movements. When this system is injured, people can experience *spinning*, *unsteadiness*, and *unclear vision*. Some people experience hearing loss and ringing in the ears (tinnitus). Head trauma can cause BPPPV (benign paroxysmal positional vertigo). Symptoms are different from patient to patient and usually depend on the type and extent of injury.

Unfortunately, many people with symptoms of inner ear injury decrease their level of activity and may even stop doing their normal activities. Avoiding activities can slow your recovery from an inner ear injury.

Physical therapy treatment for inner ear problems

Physical therapists trained in vestibular rehabilitation (inner ear therapy) can help you if your inner ear has been injured. PTs evaluate dizziness, vision with movement, and balance. A physical therapist will perform a thorough assessment and develop a treatment plan that is specific for you. Treatment includes exercises that help to decrease dizziness, improve balance, and help you see better when your head is moving. The PT will also perform a maneuver if you have BPPV. The rehabilitation program will address any stiffness or pain in the neck to help complete the recovery from inner ear symptoms.

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