

Balance & Dizziness

Q. I'm dizzy. My doctor says I have an "inner ear infection". What is that?

A. Most infections that attack the balance system are caused by viruses, so antibiotics are often not helpful. In vestibular neuritis a virus attacks the balance nerve. This produces severe, disabling dizziness. Just as when you get the flu, the body actively fights the virus. After 2 to 7 days the severe symptoms go away. Labyrinthitis is similar to vestibular neuritis, with the addition of sudden hearing loss in one ear. It is important to see an ear, nose and throat specialist as soon as possible after sudden hearing loss occurs, for treatment that may be able to "rescue" the hearing.

With both vestibular neuritis and



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labyrinthitis, permanent, scar-like damage is left behind that can be seen on balance testing. Until the brain learns about this damage and figures out how to work around it, the patient can have unsteadiness and/or motion provoked dizziness long after the severe symptoms resolve. Vestibular rehabilitation physical therapy (VRT) can speed this recovery process.



**EAR, NOSE & THROAT
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Balance

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