

BALANCE BASICS

Being able to maintain our balance is a vital skill as it assists us in standing, walking and moving around in our environment without falling. Balance disorders can have a significant impact on our daily functioning as it increases our risk of falling and can cause uncomfortable symptoms, dizziness, blurry vision and nausea.

WHAT CAUSES A BALANCE DISORDER?

Balance disorders can be caused by a variety of underlying conditions. These include, but are not limited to:

- Head injuries
- Strokes
- Injury to the ear and vestibular system
- Side effects of medication
- Neurological disorders or diseases
- Psychological distress
- Cardiovascular or circulation problems
- Surgeries to the head or neck area like cochlear implant placement
- Tumours of the acoustic and vestibular nerve
- Hearing related disorders like Ménière's disease
- Age



WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms can present in a myriad of different ways and may affect your vestibular, visual and proprioceptive function. These symptoms can be continuous and happen all the time or just occasionally, when triggered by something like a change in body position, head movements, visual or sound stimulation. These symptoms can also cause anxiety and change the way we move around. Common symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Light-headedness
- Motion sickness
- Unsteadiness
- Falling
- Difficulty moving around
- Headaches
- Visual problems
- Changes in hearing



THE ROLE OF THE AUDIOLOGIST

Audiologists are specialists in not only the hearing system and all it entails, but also the prevention, identification, diagnosis and treatment of balance disorders.

When consulting an Audiologist with regards to your balance the first step is usually a hearing assessment to determine the state of the ear and auditory system.

Other specialised tests are then performed to determine balance function during activities of daily living, as well as the function of the central nervous system and vestibular end organs.



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

An array of treatments are available, depending on the cause and severity of the symptoms. These include:

- Vestibular rehabilitation therapy that may include home based exercises
- Medication & Supplements
- Surgical intervention



SERVICES WE OFFER:

Renee Verson Audiologists is one of the only Audiology Practices in Gqeberha that perform Balance assessments. Testing includes:

- Bedside and Functional Balance Assessments
- Videonystagmography with Caloric Irrigation
- Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potential testing
- Referral to the relevant Specialists

References:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Dizziness and Balance. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.asha.org/public/hearing/dizziness-and-balance/>
- Vestibular Disorders Association. (2022a, February 24). Diagnosis & Treatment. VeDA. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://vestibular.org/article/diagnosis-treatment/>
- Vestibular Disorders Association. (2022b, September 8). Vestibular symptoms caused by inner ear injury or illness. VeDA. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://vestibular.org/article/what-is-vestibular-vestibular-symptoms/>