

# **A Balancing Act: Dizziness, Stability Issues Signs Of Vestibular Issues**

October 24 2021 7:15 AM



**ROCKFORD** - It's not uncommon for someone to occasionally lose their balance or feel dizzy after moving too quickly. But when it becomes an ongoing issue, the problem could be related to the vestibular system.

"The vestibular system is part of your inner ear and it works closely with your visual system and your somatosensory to control your balance," says Rebekah Lesko, a physical therapist for OSF HealthCare. "There are lots of different parts of your inner ear that control your sense of position, when you turn your head, you tilt your head,

when you're moving forward, up and down, and it's a really intricate system that helps you know where you're at and how you're controlling your body."

There are many things that can impact the vestibular system, including viruses, low Vitamin D levels, concussions and reasons that are simply unknown. According to Lesko, adults are prone to issues with their vestibular system as they age.

"If people are noticing general dizziness symptoms with changes in position, when they're moving, turning their head quickly, when they try to turn when they're walking and talking to a friend, those are pretty common signs of vestibular dysfunction," says Lesko. Other symptoms include blurred vision, falling, and nausea.

But vestibular disorders can happen to anyone, something 30-year-old Danielle Higgins learned after an accident. The Rochelle resident injured herself last summer when she fell 10 feet from a rope swing and landed on her forehead. Higgins suffered a severe concussion and continues to experience headaches, and issues with focus, noise and balance.

"I have three kids at home and two dogs and a cat so when things get chaotic I do struggle," says Higgins. "I have to give myself a timeout and away from the light and the sound. I work in a busy ER so sometimes that involves taking a break at work and changing how I deal with patients and how much interaction time I get. It's taking a step back and I want to keep going forward but we're not quite there yet."

Most patients experiencing vestibular disorders will be seen by a primary care provider or ENT and then referred to physical therapy, where they will likely be seen by a therapist who specializes in vestibular dysfunction. Lesko says 50 % of her clients have some type of vestibular disorder, depending on the time of year, and that advances in technology have greatly improved the outcome for many patients.

"It depends on the type of condition; if it's something like BPPV (Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo), where the otoconia is in the canal – that typically takes one or two sessions to get a correction done, so that treatment is very fast," says Lesko. "With other type of hypo functions we usually see people one time a week for 6 to 8 weeks. Some people more, some people less. It depends on the person and how quickly they respond to treatment."

Since her accident, Higgins has been undergoing physical therapy twice a week. She does a variety of activities including ball toss, using a stationary bicycle and foam work, in hopes of reducing her headaches, and regaining both focus and range of motion.

“When I first started coming here I went to my kids’ baseball games and I couldn’t follow the ball,” says Higgins. “I would lose sight of it. I’m now able to watch them play sports and follow everything and not get dizzy when I’m going back and forth. I’m slowly able to handle more, taking on the light and computer at work and looking at my phone without getting so bad anymore.”

For more information on vestibular disorders, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).