



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Balance

*Do you
have
trouble
with
balance
since
your
brain
injury?*

What does this mean?

Balance is the ability to keep your body centered over your feet. The ability to maintain balance is determined by many factors, including physical strength and coordination, senses, and cognitive (thinking) ability. Most people can control their body movement within certain limits before losing their balance and needing to adjust their posture or taking a step to keep from falling. Adjusting posture or taking a step to maintain balance before, during, and after movement is a complex process that is often affected after brain injury.

How might a brain injury affect balance?

People with brain injury commonly report problems with balance. Between 30% and 65% of people with brain injury suffer from dizziness and disequilibrium (lack of balance while sitting or standing) at some point in their recovery. Dizziness includes symptoms such as lightheadedness, vertigo (the sensation that you or your surroundings are moving), and imbalance.

Common reasons for balance issues:

- ◆ A possible side effect of medications.
- ◆ A drop in blood pressure when standing or sitting up suddenly.
- ◆ Problems with eyesight (vision impairments).
- ◆ Inner ear problems (vestibular impairments).
- ◆ Problems with your ability to sense things (sensory impairments).
- ◆ A traumatic injury to the brainstem and cerebellum.
- ◆ Leakage of inner ear fluid into the middle ear (called perilymph fistula).
- ◆ Mental health issues (anxiety, depression or a fear of falling).

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ A physical or occupational therapist can help design a program that is safe to practice at home. Be cautious when working on balance, and make sure you work at an appropriate level to avoid falling when no one is around.
- ◆ Increase your strength and flexibility to help your balance.
- ◆ Find your limits in balance by moving your body over your feet as far as you can without lifting your feet.
- ◆ Practice movements that allow the transition from one position to another.
- ◆ Practice standing or walking in different conditions.
- ◆ Practice activities that will improve balance while walking.

Sources: IU School of Medicine / Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana TBI Model Systems. Further, the information in this FACT SHEET is also based on a consensus of expert opinion of the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana Departments of Neuropsychology and Resource Facilitation.

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatments.

RHI Resource Facilitation Department
9531 Valparaiso Court • Indianapolis, Indiana 46268
Tel: (317) 329-2455 | Fax: (317) 872-0914