

# VESTIBULAR AWARENESS

The vestibular system is involved in the inner ear, which detects movement of the head etc. It's how we work out speed and direction of our movement. We need it to stay upright against gravity, maintain muscle tone and adjust ourselves to keep our balance. It helps us tell what position we are in, for example it tells us if our arms are down, feet and body are straight, if we are standing or lying and also how fast we are moving. It causes us to feel dizzy when we spin and causes motion sickness.

If it is not working well- like a gyroscope in a plane- we would have poor awareness of the direction we were moving or when we changed. It works with vision to give accurate guided movement. If an object looks tilted it tells our brain if it is our head that is tilted or the object.

## DIFFICULTIES A CHILD MAY PRESENT WITH:

- Difficulty maintaining balance.
- Fear of falling.
- Difficulty reading and copying from board to desk.
- Slumped, difficulty maintaining upright position. Very tiring to stay upright.
- Often prefer to watch TV than play.
- May fall off chairs.
- Poor concentration.

## TREATMENT AIMS:

- To provide the child with activities that stimulate the vestibular system, which will, in turn, enable them to determine directional movements and maintain postural control.

## VESTIBULAR ACTIVITIES:

### Rolling tasks:

- Wrapping up in a sheet
- Along a line of mats
- Down a shallow grass banks
- Forward rolls
- Fast and slow to command
- To knock down skittles positioned at the end of mats

### Swinging tasks:

- Swinging on a rope

### Running Tasks:

- Running and changing direction on command; running and jumping on command.
- Running and jumping on command

Spinning tasks - brief periods only- if child shows adverse reactions stop the activity

**Spinning:**

- Standing up with arms outstretched
- Sitting on bottom, spin self with hands

**Pulling activities:**

- Sit on a sheet towel and pull them around the gym at different speeds, taking care they can maintain balance.

**Additional activities:**

- Park/playground equipment slides, swings.
- Merry-go-rounds.
- Trampolines.

**PRECAUTIONS**

Spinning tasks in particular can be intense and cause sickness and, in severe cases, passing out. You should therefore be aware of this and you should allow the child to take control of themselves.

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