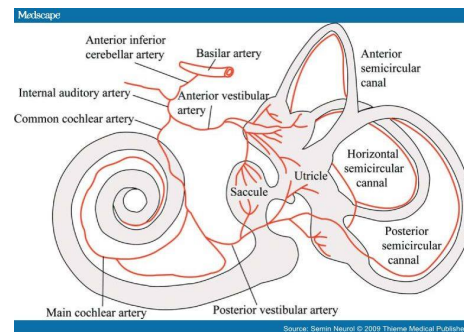


SYMPTOMS

What are the symptoms of a vestibular disorder?

The vestibular system includes the parts of the inner ear and brain that help control balance and eye movements. If the system is damaged by disease, aging, or injury, vestibular disorders can result, and are often associated with one or more of these symptoms, among others:

- ▶ **Vertigo and dizziness**
- ▶ **Imbalance and spatial disorientation**
- ▶ **Vision disturbance**
- ▶ **Hearing changes**
- ▶ **Cognitive and/or psychological changes**
- ▶ **Other symptoms**



The type and severity of vestibular disorder symptoms can vary considerably, and be frightening and difficult to describe. People affected by vestibular disorders may be perceived as inattentive, lazy, overly anxious, or seeking attention. Functioning at work or school, performing routine daily tasks, or just getting out of bed in the morning may be difficult.

The following is a list of symptoms that have been reported by people with vestibular disorders. Not all symptoms will be experienced by every person, and other symptoms are possible.

VERTIGO AND DIZZINESS

- ▶ Spinning or whirling sensation; a feeling the person or world moving when it is not (vertigo)
- ▶ Symptoms can be present while sitting still, in specific positions, or with movement
- ▶ Lightheaded, floating, or rocking sensation (dizziness)
- ▶ Sensation of being heavily weighted or pulled in one direction

BALANCE AND SPATIAL ORIENTATION

- ▶ Imbalance, stumbling, difficulty walking straight or when turning
- ▶ Clumsiness or difficulty with coordination
- ▶ Difficulty maintaining straight posture; head may be tilted to the side
- ▶ Tendency to look downward to confirm the location of the ground
- ▶ Tendency to touch or hold onto something when standing, or to touch or hold the head while seated
- ▶ Sensitivity to changes in walking surfaces or footwear
- ▶ Difficulty walking in the dark
- ▶ Muscle and joint pain (due to difficulty balancing)

VISION

- ▶ Trouble focusing or tracking objects with the eyes; objects or words on a page seem to jump, bounce, float, or blur or may appear doubled
- ▶ Discomfort from busy visual environments such as traffic, crowds, stores, and patterns
- ▶ Sensitivity to light, glare, and moving or flickering lights; fluorescent lights may be especially troublesome

- ▶ **Sensitivity to certain types of computer monitors and digital televisions**
- ▶ Tendency to focus on nearby objects; increased discomfort when focusing at a distance
- ▶ Increased night blindness; difficulty walking in the dark
- ▶ Poor depth perception

Visit the [Neuro-Optometric Association's website](#) for more information about balance and the illusions of eye movement.

HEARING CHANGES

- ▶ Hearing loss; distorted or fluctuating hearing
- ▶ **Tinnitus (ringing, roaring, buzzing, whooshing, or other noises in the ear)**
- ▶ Sensitivity to loud noises or environments
- ▶ Sudden loud sounds may increase symptoms of vertigo, dizziness, or imbalance

COGNITIVE

- ▶ Difficulty concentrating and paying attention; easily distracted
- ▶ Forgetfulness and short-term memory lapses
- ▶ Confusion, disorientation, difficulty comprehending directions or instructions
- ▶ Difficulty understanding conversations, especially when there is background noise or movement
- ▶ Mental and/or physical fatigue out of proportion to activity

[Click here to read more about the cognitive impacts of vestibular disorders.](#)

PSYCHOLOGICAL

- ▶ Loss of self-reliance, self-confidence, self-esteem
- ▶ Anxiety, panic, social isolation
- ▶ Depression

[Click here to read more about the emotional impacts of vestibular disorders.](#)

OTHER

- ▶ Nausea or vomiting
- ▶ "Hangover" or "seasick" feeling in the head
- ▶ Motion sickness
- ▶ Sensation of fullness in the ears
- ▶ Ear pain
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Slurred speech

An inner ear disorder may be present even when there are no obvious or severe symptoms. It is important to note that most of these individual symptoms can also be caused by other unrelated conditions and should be discussed with a health professional.

DID THIS INFORMATION HELP YOU?

Thanks to VeDA, vestibular disorders are becoming recognized for their impacts on people's lives and our economy. We see new diagnostic tools and research studies, more accessible treatments, and a growing respect for how life-changing vestibular disorders can be.

Your support of VeDA matters. Please help us continue this important work by becoming a **member** or **donor**.

[Click here to download a complete copy of this publication, "Possible Symptoms of a Vestibular Disorder."](#)

CONTACT US

(800) 837-8428 Phone | (503) 229-8064 Fax | 5018 NE 15th Ave | Portland, OR 97211 | Tax ID 93-0914340 | **[Privacy Policy](#)**
