

Balance Retraining Therapy

What is it?

Balance Retraining Therapy (BRT) is a specialized form of physical therapy to decrease, if not eliminate, primary symptoms of movement-related dizziness and imbalance through a customized "hands-on" approach. Additional symptoms addressed in therapy may include decreased strength, loss of range-of-motion, muscle tension, anxiety and fatigue.

What does Balance Retraining Therapy involve?

The initial evaluation should be performed by a specialist and may include the following:

- A thorough history of the patient's symptoms and past medical history
- A musculoskeletal assessment for strength, range-of-motion, flexibility, and soft tissue dysfunction
- Neurological testing (e.g., reflexes, proprioception and sensation)
- Assessment of eye and head movements (including video recordings)
- Balance and specialized vestibular tests (in walking and standing)
- Customized plan of care, including a home exercise program



Re-evaluation of the patient is also a critical component to a successful program. Follow-up patient evaluations at specific intervals allow for continued customization of the BRT program by monitoring the patient's changes during rehabilitation. Follow-up diagnostic testing from the patient's physician and/or audiologist can also provide additional information about the status of the patient as well as useful information for further customizing BRT.

Typically, this form of therapy is 8-12 visits over a four to six week period although this will vary among patients. The intensity, frequency and duration of BRT are customized to each patient based on the findings of the evaluation, the diagnosis, and the prognosis.

Optimal outcomes of a vestibular rehabilitation program depend on an accurate diagnosis, appropriate care plan and coordinated efforts between all parties involved – health care providers, insurance companies, and, most importantly, the patient and family. The "team" approach is comprehensive and results in quality care for the patient.

Research shows that patients respond better to patient-specific rehabilitation, showing an 85% improvement in a customized exercise program while less than 50% improvements were noted when the patient is treated with medication alone.

