



VESTI BU LAR

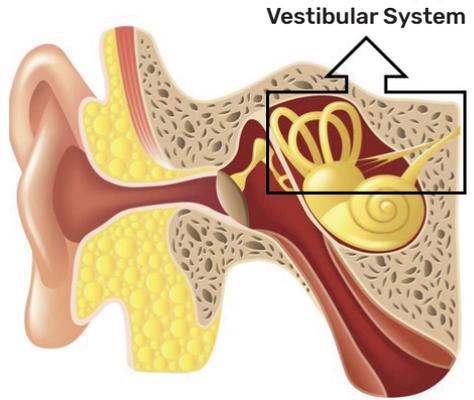
DISORDERS



Ordre des orthophonistes
et audiologistes du Québec

WHAT IS THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM?

The vestibular system is located in the inner ear. It works with the visual and proprioceptive (*tactile*) systems to maintain balance.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

The **vestibular system** helps you maintain postural control and stabilize your vision when you move your head. It also assists with spatial orientation and movement perception. Information is then transmitted to your brain, which acts like an orchestra conductor, putting all the data together to allow you to maintain your balance.



VESTIBULAR DISORDERS

People with vestibular disorders may experience:

VERTIGO¹

DIZZINESS²

LOSS OF BALANCE

NAUSEA

BLURRED VISION

1. YOU FEEL AS IF THE ROOM IS SPINNING

2. LIGHTEADENESS OR YOU FEEL AS IF YOU ARE ON A BOAT

- Vertigo and dizziness are symptoms frequently reported to health professionals. These symptoms affect **15% to 35%** of the population during the course of their lives.
- Vestibular disorders affect **19%** of individuals in their forties, but over **85%** of individuals aged 80 and over.
- There are various causes of vestibular disorders, whose symptoms differ by duration, frequency and triggering factors (head movement, visual stimulation, etc.).



BENIGN PAROXYSMAL POSITIONAL VERTIGO (BPPV)

This is the most frequent **vestibular disorder**:

- › It is caused by the displacement of particles in the vestibular system canals.
- › It lasts less than a minute.
- › It is often very intense and unpleasant.
- › It may be triggered by head movements or changes in position, and can occur when a person turns in bed.
- › It is a benign condition and easily treatable.
- › It can be sometimes recurrent.

Other vestibular disorders may also be caused by:

- › normal aging;
- › bacteria or a virus (e.g. vestibular neuronitis, labyrinthitis);
- › side effects from medication;
- › a central nervous system problem;
- › other medical conditions.



POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS:

In all cases, other symptoms may also occur, such as:

TINNITUS

HEARING LOSS

EXCESSIVE SWEATING

VOMITING

INTOLERANCE TO SOUNDS

Some episodes of vestibular disorders resolve on their own. When symptoms persist, an assessment by a professional is required. In this case, you can consult an audiologist.

AUDIOLOGISTS

- ▶ Are health professionals who hold Master's degrees.
- ▶ Keep their knowledge up-to-date in the field of hearing and vestibular health.
- ▶ Assess and treat people with hearing and vestibular system disorders.

AUDIOLOGISTS WORK IN INTEGRATED HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES CENTRES OR PRIVATE CLINICS

ASSESSING VESTIBULAR DISORDERS

During an assessment, the audiologist will use various tests or methods to determine whether a patient's symptoms are caused by a vestibular disorder, for example:

- ▶ Data collection (interview, questionnaire, etc.);
- ▶ Positional vertigo assessment and repositioning;
- ▶ Eye movement tests using specialized equipment;
- ▶ Electrophysiological assessment, requiring the use of electrodes placed on the face or neck;
- ▶ Functional assessment (ability to perform one's activities and maintain one's lifestyle);
- ▶ Assessment of the person's overall needs;
- ▶ Hearing assessment when necessary.

VESTIBULAR REHABILITATION

An audiologist will treat a person with a vestibular disorder with a personalized exercise program that aims to:

REDUCE OR ELIMINATE VERTIGO

REDUCE VISUAL INSTABILITY

RESTORE BALANCE
AND REDUCE THE RISK OF FALLS

Different types of exercises can be recommended, depending on the assessment, as well as the difficulties and needs of the person. These exercises involve the visual and tactile systems.

- ▶ Eye exercises, such as following a moving object or fixating a stable picture while moving the head;
- ▶ Habituation exercises to reduce symptoms triggered by movements;
- ▶ Static and dynamic exercises to maintain posture.

These exercises can be done safely either in a clinical setting or at home.

AUDIOLOGISTS WORK TOGETHER WITH OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Most vestibular disorders are benign and treatable. In cases where symptoms are associated with other health issues, the audiologist will be able to refer you to another healthcare professional, such as a general physician, ear-nose-throat (ENT) specialist, neurologist, physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to discuss them with an audiologist or contact the [Ordre des orthophonistes et audiologistes du Québec](#).



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