

Principles of Cawthorne-Cooksey Exercises

Instructions for patients

The balance parts of the two ears complement each other sending equal impulses to the brain, which are essential for the maintenance of equilibrium of the head and body.

If either or both balance centres are damaged, equilibrium is upset. The result of this is vertigo or giddiness, which may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Although this condition may be very frightening, it is not serious in that it does not, in itself, threaten life. It can, furthermore, be overcome by carrying out special exercises.

The purpose of the exercises is to build up a tolerance mechanism in the brain, which compensates for the unequal balance of the two ears. The exercises stimulate the development of this tolerance mechanism and the more diligently and regularly they are performed, the sooner the vertigo will disappear.

The exercises should be carried out persistently for at least five minutes three times daily and for as long as vertigo persists. This may be for one to three months. A conscious effort should be made to seek out the head positions and movements that cause vertigo in so far as can be tolerated, because the more frequently vertigo is induced the more quickly is the brain compensation mechanism built up.

As normal a life as possible is meanwhile to be recommended. Early return to work and sports are helpful in rehabilitation.

Diligence and perseverance will be required, but the earlier and more regularly the balance exercise regime is carried out, the faster and more complete will be recovery to normal activity. If at first the exercises aggravate symptoms, they should be continued at a lesser frequency.

Cooksey-Cawthorne Exercises

Lying Down (eyes open and closed)

- a) Rolling head from side to side, also over the edge of bed
- b) Rolling whole body from side to side
- c) Sitting up straight, forwards and from side lying

Sitting

1. Eye movements – at first slowly, then quickly.
 - a) Up and down
 - b) From side to side
 - c) Focusing on finger moving from 3 feet to 1 foot away from face
2. Head movements at first slowly, then quickly. Later with eyes closed.
 - a) Bending forwards and backwards
 - b) Turning from side to side

Standing

Eyes

Movements at first slowly, then quickly.

- a) Up and down, side to side
- b) Focusing on finger moving from 3 feet to 1 foot away from face

Head

Movements at first slowly, then quickly (also with eyes closed).

- a) Bending forwards and backwards
- b) Turning from side to side

Trunk

Movements (eyes open and closed, except d)

- a) Bending forwards to pick up objects from the floor
- b) Bending forwards to pick up ball from floor, and twist body to put ball behind, first to left and then to right
- c) Drop shoulder and head sideways to left and right
- d) Throwing and catching ball to the side and above head
- e) Pass ball between legs and above head
- f) Change from sitting to standing with eyes open and closed, also turning round in between
- g) Turning on the spot to left and right, eyes open and closed (will require supervision)
- h) Walk with another person, throwing and catching ball in a circle and straight line
- i) With another person's help, walk, eyes open and closed, backwards and forwards, sideways, turning head, looking in all directions to avoid fixating with eyes
- j) Walking in a circle forwards and backwards with head turned to left and right, eyes open and closed

Recommendation:

Each exercise should be done about 5 times with 2 repeats

5-10 minute sessions (including rests)

3-4 sessions per day