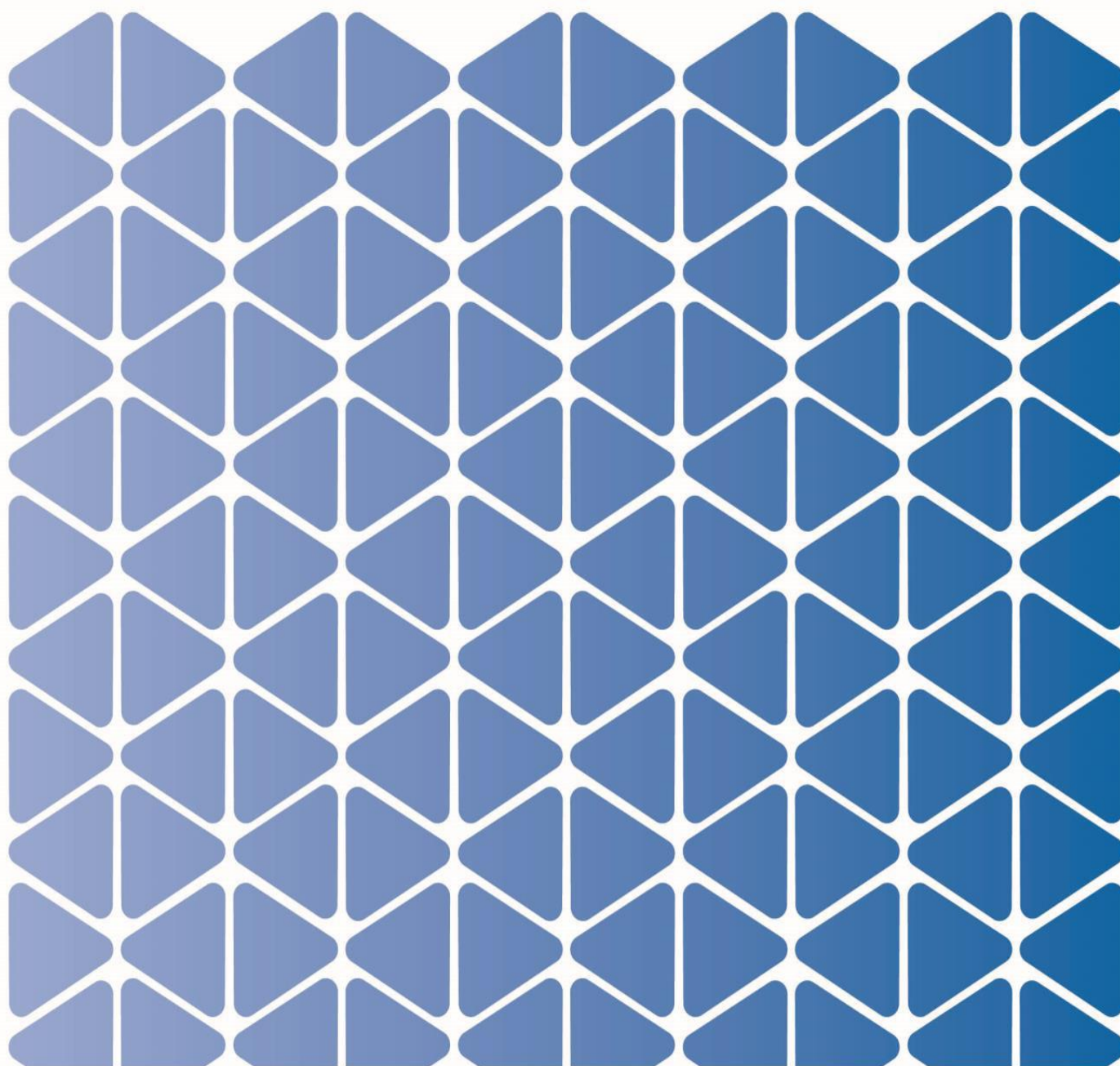


PATIENT INFORMATION

Balance and Anxiety

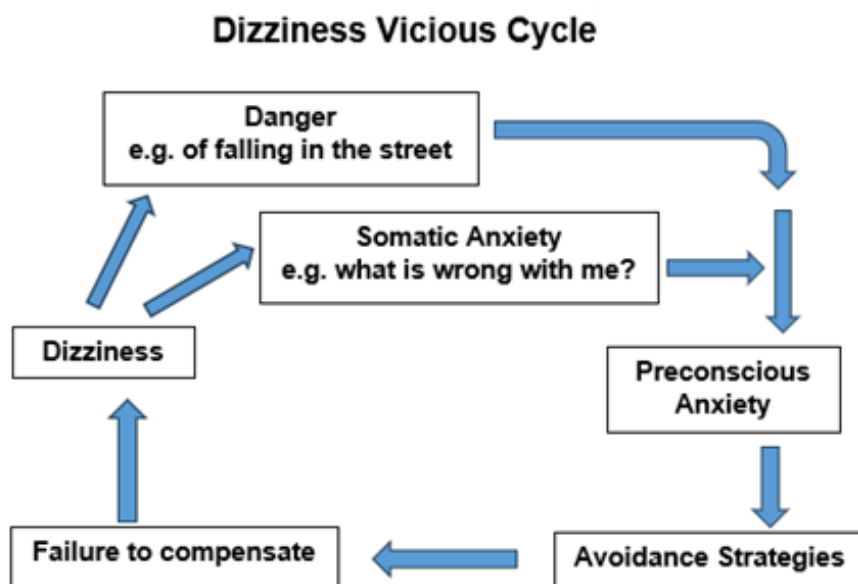


The equilibrium-anxiety connection

- Fear may be the primary driver of anxiety and panic for most vestibular patients, but there are also other factors at play, which can be even harder to control.
- At a deeper level, dizziness and vertigo are so scary because they dislocate your sense of space.
- Most of us take our sense of balance for granted because we really don't ever have to think about it until something goes wrong, but at all times, our inner ear, joints and muscles, and eyes, are continuously feeding our brain the information it needs to maintain equilibrium.
- Anxiety and panic are the emotional outcomes of this type of uncertainty as well.

The Vicious Cycle

- The biggest issue of all is that anxiety creates a negative feedback loop.
- Dizziness and vertigo cause the initial feeling of panic and anxiety, which in turn causes the vertigo and dizziness to worsen and happen more frequently. This only causes more anxiety, at which point the vicious cycle repeats.
- Balance issues and anxiety are closely intertwined, if you work to get your anxiety under control, the severity of your dizziness, vertigo, and other symptoms should improve as well. At the very least, you will be able to cope a lot more effectively.



Management Strategies

The best strategy is to immediately start taking steps to reduce your anxiety. Some of the strategies are best used during acute episodes of dizziness or vertigo, while others are meant to bring overall stress and anxiety levels down throughout your life.

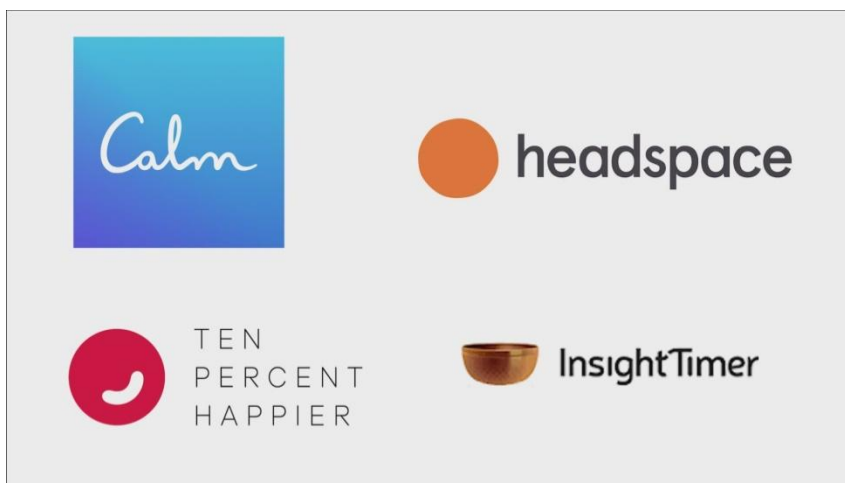
Counselling, Psychotherapy or ‘talk therapy’

A fantastic resource that can help you reduce your anxiety by addressing the underlying issues that are causing it in the first place. It can also be a great way to learn other healthy coping strategies to better deal with living with a vestibular disorder. It’s important to find the right therapist and a therapeutic style that matches your personality and situation.

Mindfulness/Meditation

Mindful meditation involves relaxation and breathing exercises that help you to pay attention to the present moment. It can help you to become more aware of how you tend to respond to difficult things such as anxiety and your balance. There is evidence that has shown it to be very helpful in changing how we react to things.

There are many styles of mindfulness and many simple ways to get started; Mindfulness/ Meditation Apps are a great way to learn.



Breathing Techniques

Muscle relaxation and breathing techniques are useful techniques to help reduce anxiety/stress.

Relaxation is an acquired skill which improves every time it is practiced. It is worth noting that relaxation is time given to you to concentrate on your physical and psychological well-being. Learning to breathe more deeply can help you feel a lot calmer.

Relaxation techniques are extremely effective, proven over many years. Once learnt it needs to be practiced consistently until it becomes a way of life.

Exercise

Exercise is another powerful way to help manage your anxiety and it doesn’t have to be intense to give you the benefits.

The limitation here, is it can be difficult to start exercising, especially when you are actively experiencing vertigo or dizziness. Stationary bicycles, treadmills are good choices, as you can hold on to the railings for balance while you exercise.

Specific activities like yoga and tai chi are excellent options for vestibular patients and are often recommended

Improve Sleep

A good night of sleep can go a long way towards reducing overall anxiety levels. It can be important when managing a vestibular disorder. To be able to get enough high-quality sleep is very important.

The strategies won't cure your condition or solve all of your problems, but it can help manage and improve the severity of your vertigo, dizziness, other vestibular symptoms, and overall health.

Useful Websites and Contacts:

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Talking Therapies

You can self-refer for talking therapies on the NHS. They offer mental health and wellbeing support for conditions such as stress, anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, low mood and depression.

Helpline: 0300 0135 727

Website: www.talkingtherapies.hwhct

No Panic

Support for sufferers of panic attacks, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders, general anxiety disorder and tranquilliser withdrawal.

Helpline: 0300 772 9844

Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

Tinnitus UK

Recommended for people suffering with tinnitus.

Helpline: 0800 018 0527

Website: www.tinnitus.org.uk

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or queries:

Worcester: 01905 760171/ 01905 733432

Redditch/ Bromsgrove: 01527 505741

Evesham: 01386 502578

Kidderminster: 01562 826324/ 01562 826323

Text users: 07786 334306/ 07436 035394

Website: www.worcsacute.nhs.uk/audiology

Email: wah-tr.AudiologyHearingServices@nhs.net

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.