

---

## Habituation exercises for dizziness

Habituation means getting use to something. Habituation refers to a process that aims to increase your tolerance to certain stimuli (or in this case 'movements'). Habituation exercises are designed to get your brain used to dizziness and sensitivity to movement. By repeatedly exposing yourself in small, controlled doses to certain activities that make you dizzy, you will allow your brain to adapt to the sensation of dizziness. As a result, in the long run, you will experience no or less dizziness during dizziness-provoking movements and thus be less impaired in your daily life.

The example of the scented candle is very helpful to understand habituation. When a scented candle is lit, at first the scent of the candle is very strong. Over time, your brain adapts to this scent and you don't smell the candle as distinctly, although the candle still gives off the same amount of scent! Habituation exercises use the same principle, with the goal that your brain will get used to dizziness.

This principle can be applied to all activities that cause your symptoms in everyday life. Instead of avoiding activities that make you dizzy, use the idea of habituation, and carefully expose yourself to these activities so that they no longer bother you! For example, if you look down to fasten your seatbelt and experience severe dizziness while doing so, you can turn this activity into an exercise. Perform this activity in a controlled manner so that your symptoms do not exceed 4-5 on a scale of 0 to 10. Then you can rest, let your symptoms subside, and then repeat the exercise 4-5 more times. Each repetition will provoke your dizziness to a lesser and lesser degree until eventually you can complete the movement without dizziness. In some cases, you may need to practice the activities for several days or weeks before you no longer provoke symptoms.

Unlike other exercises that can be done permanently, it is important to be thoughtful about habit exercises. You must give your brain time before starting a second repetition. Otherwise, you may overstress your brain by overstimulating it and make the dizziness worse in the short term. It is better to practice several times briefly rather than doing multiple repetitions in a short period of time. With the first strategy (practicing several times briefly), you give your brain time to recover. With practice, you will learn to use habituation as a tool and manage your vertigo. Through this, in the long run, you will be able to perform everyday activities and head movements without dizziness.

## Daily exercise program - Habituation therapy

Adapted from Motion Sensitivity Quotient (MSQ)

Perform the habituation exercises \_\_\_\_ times a day.

**Provoke mild to moderate symptoms, meaning dizziness should be approximately between 3-5 on a scale of 0 (no dizziness) to 10 (unbearable dizziness). Modify the exercises by using slower movements, smaller movements, fewer repetitions, longer rests between repetitions, or by changing the time of day you exercise. On the second repetition, the dizziness should be either similar (3-5 out of 10) or weaker.**

1. In supine position – rolling in bed or on the floor.
  - ☐ Roll to the right (360°), wait until symptoms subside. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ Roll to the left (360°), wait until symptoms subside. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ \* Wait until symptoms return to baseline and repeat \_\_\_\_ more series.
2. In supine position – from supine position to sitting position.
  - ☐ Come from supine to a sitting position (keep legs stretched), wait for symptoms to subside, and lie back on your back from the sitting position. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ \* Wait until symptoms return to baseline and repeat \_\_\_\_ more series.
3. In sitting position - bend forward
  - ☐ Bend forward and straighten back up. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ \* Wait until symptoms return to baseline and repeat \_\_\_\_ more series.
4. In sitting – head turns
  - ☐ Rotate the head horizontally (right-left). Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ Move the head vertically (top-bottom). Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ Move the head from top-left to bottom-right (diagonal). Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ Move head from top-right to bottom-left (diagonally). Repeat \_\_\_\_ times\*
  - ☐ \*Wait until symptoms return to baseline and repeat \_\_\_\_ more series.
5. Standing in a “safe corner” - turning
  - ☐ Rotate \_\_\_\_° to the right. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.  
Wait for symptoms to return to baseline after each repetition!
  - ☐ Rotate \_\_\_\_° to the left. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.
  - ☐ Wait for symptoms to return to baseline after each repetition!
6. Practice walking (on level ground at the beginning, i.e. not outdoors)
  - ☐ Turn the head horizontally (right-left) while walking. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.
  - ☐ Move the head vertically (up-down) while walking. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.
  - ☐ Move head diagonally (up-left down-right & vice versa). Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.
7. Ball exercises
  - ☐ Throw a ball from one hand to the other and follow the ball with your eyes and head.
  - ☐ Pass the ball backwards over your right/left shoulder while walking (this requires a person to walk behind you). You must move your torso and head with this and follow the ball.
  - ☐ Wait until symptoms return to baseline and repeat \_\_\_\_ more series.
8. Other exercise: \_\_\_\_\_ - repeat \_\_\_\_ times