

Vestibular: Overview and Activities

The **Vestibular** system is in the inner ear and is stimulated every time the head moves. This system gives us a sense of movement and gravity and it helps us to balance, allowing us to have an upright posture and has an effect on coordinating eye movements. This sense can be easily **over-stimulated** - such as when you feel dizzy or sick after going on a rollercoaster!



Some children can be very sensitive to vestibular input (movement) and may get easily sick.



These are the children that may have travel sickness, and be scared or nervous of moving play equipment such as swings and roundabouts.

Other children seek additional vestibular Input (movement) and therefore are always on the move; jumping, spinning or hanging their head upside down.



Use Caution!

As a general rule, linear movement (backwards and forwards) is more calming to the nervous system than rotational movement (spinning).

We would never advise spinning your child as this could easily over excite them or make them nauseous.

Signs of over stimulating the vestibular system are:

- looking pale,
- sweating,
- large pupils and
- sickness.

Be guided by your child's reaction and where possible always let them lead the activity.



Combine different types of movement!



Where possible team vestibular input with proprioceptive input (muscle work) as this helps the nervous system to process the movement and 'ground' the individual.

For example: Ask your child to pull on a rope to start swinging a swing, pedaling a bike/ using a scooter will be using leg muscles whilst still moving forward.

Should this not be possible, try to do a proprioceptive activity before and after the movement eg. Walk to the park carrying a backpack, or pushing a trolley.

Think about what activities you might do.

Write a list, for example:

- * Trampolines
- * Rockers and seesaws
- * Slides
- * Ride-on toys including bikes, tricycles and scooters



Other activities might include:

- Car rides
- Swings (backwards and forwards, not side to side)



- Action songs which involve movement, such as "row, row, your boat"