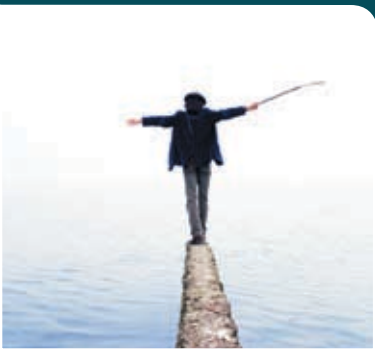




## PERSONAL MESSAGE

# Treating and Preventing Imbalance and Dizziness

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**B**alance and dizziness disorders are a common problem many people deal with throughout their lifetime. Often we hear people say, “There is nothing that will improve my balance or dizziness,” or, “impaired balance and dizziness are a part of aging.” It is important to dispel these statements and to inform people of ways to prevent and treat balance and dizziness disorders.

We see patients with many different causes of balance loss and dizziness. The majority of these conditions are treatable if you are given the proper education, exercises and treatment techniques. The first and perhaps the most crucial step is to get properly evaluated by your doctor, audiologist or physical therapist. We routinely work together with your doctor or audiologist in order to determine the major cause or causes of your balance or dizziness problems. Each medical professional has a series of specialized clinical and functional tests that help to zero-in on what systems are most involved and need further treatment or correction.

The physical therapy evaluation will consist of mobility tests, strength testing, functional testing and balance and dizziness tests designed to help rule out the causes and identify compensated areas that may need to be rehabilitated.



*Sheila Yonemoto, PT—Owner, Yonemoto Physical Therapy*

Many times, following a complete evaluation, a very simple and effective strength, balance and coordination exercise program can be designed to rapidly improve the condition and to prevent and improve the incidence of falls and dizziness. Regular physical therapy treatment sessions may incorporate balance activities or specific activities for treatment of dizziness, or a combination of the two. You should also be given a specialized home exercise program to be performed on a regular basis. Following your therapist’s suggestions will aid in improving your balance and decreasing your dizziness in order to confidently return you to a safe and active lifestyle.

## UNDERSTANDING **DIZZINESS** and **IMBALANCE**



“Your balance complex depends on three main systems:  
1) your sensory systems for information about body position within your environment,  
2) your brain to process this information, and  
3) your muscles and joints to coordinate the movements required to maintain your balance.”

It has been estimated that 65 percent of individuals older than 60 years of age experience loss of balance or dizziness often on a daily basis. Anyone who suffers from a balance or dizziness disorder will tell you how profoundly it can disrupt their daily lives. Your balance is vital to normal daily

activities such as walking, getting out of a chair and picking up an object off the floor.

Your balance complex depends on three main systems: 1) your sensory systems for information about body position within your environment, 2) your brain to process this information, and 3) your muscles and joints to coordinate the movements required to maintain your balance. Your sensory systems include your sense of touch, your vision and your inner ear. We rely on our feet to tell us if the ground is moving or uneven, our eyes to tell us if the environment is moving or still and our inner ears give us information if we are moving, standing still, upright or leaning one direction or another. In a person with a balance disorder, any one of these systems or multiple systems can be impaired. Decreased activity levels, decreased strength and flexibility, history of prior surgeries, arthritis and neurological diseases can also affect your overall balance.

Dizziness is one of the leading complaints patients take to their physicians, second only to low back pain. Dizziness is most often caused by a dysfunction in the inner ear system, which is called the vestibular

system. Your vestibular system is your main balance center. Most of the time when you have a vestibular dysfunction you will have symptoms of vertigo, or spinning, which can cause imbalance, nausea and decreased function. You may also experience hearing loss on the side that has the dysfunction. It is important to identify the actual cause of the dizziness in order to treat it effectively. Below are several of the most common causes of inner ear disorders.

### **Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV):**

BPPV is an inner ear disorder, which calcium carbonate crystals called otoconia or “ear rocks” become detached from their normal location in the inner ear and interfere with the normal function of the vestibular system. Symptoms are brief periods of vertigo, lasting less than one minute. The most common occurrence of symptoms is when you lie down in bed, get out of bed, roll over in bed or look up or down with a change in head position during the day.

**Treatment:** BPPV is treated with physical maneuvers of the head in specific positions, with the goal of moving the “ear rocks” back to the membrane where they are originally located. These procedures are done right in the clinic and take about 15 minutes.

**Meniere’s Disease:** This is a condition in which there is an abnormality of fluid built up with the inner ear. Repeated attacks of vertigo are accompanied by pressure in the ear, buzzing or ringing, and partial hearing loss that can fluctuate during an episode. Over time, and after multiple episodes, hearing loss can become permanent. Meniere’s usually starts in men and women at the age of 20-50 years old and normally affects only one ear, but both ears can be involved.

**Treatment:** Meniere's disease is first treated with dietary modifications. A low salt diet and a diuretic (water pill) may reduce the frequency of attacks in some patients. Avoiding caffeine, smoking and alcohol may also decrease the frequency of attacks. Along with diet modifications, vestibular rehabilitation for improving balance can be beneficial. Surgery within the involved ear can help to decrease the symptoms of dizziness if other options do not help.

**Vestibular Neuritis and Labyrinthitis:**

Both cause dizziness due to a viral infection of the nerves to the inner ear. Vestibular neuritis does not affect hearing, but with labyrinthitis hearing may be diminished. The symptoms generally consist of dizziness and vertigo, disequilibrium or imbalance, and nausea. Acutely, symptoms are

constant, but after a few days only sudden head movements will increase the symptoms.

**Treatment:** Acutely, symptoms are treated with steroids, to decrease the inflammation, anti-nausea meds as well as vestibular suppressants. As soon as the patient can tolerate head movements, a vestibular rehabilitation should be implemented in order to achieve compensation from loss of vestibular function.

**Your Physical Therapist Can Help**

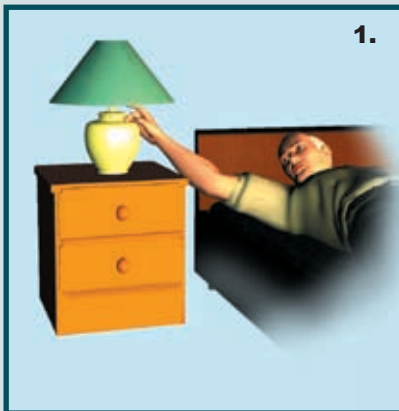
Your physical therapist will work in conjunction with your doctor and audiologist in order to develop a plan of care that best meets your needs. The physical therapy evaluation will consist of range of motion, strength testing, balance and dizziness tests, as well as

functional testing. Upon completion of the evaluation, eye and head exercises will be introduced, along with specific balance activities and functional re-training of daily activities.

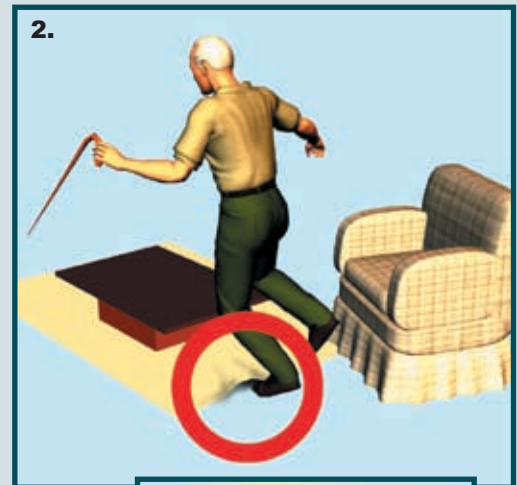
In most cases, the sooner therapy begins, the sooner you will improve your dizziness and imbalance, which will allow you to return to your normal daily routine and activities. A person should not ignore the signs and symptoms of balance or dizziness disorders. Find out why you are having a decrease in overall function and see your doctor, audiologist or physical therapist as soon as possible.

# Tips and Tricks

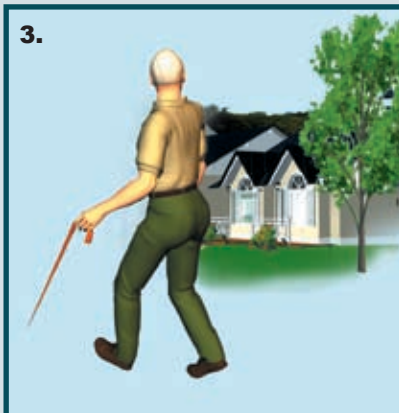
## AIDS AND TIPS FOR BALANCE



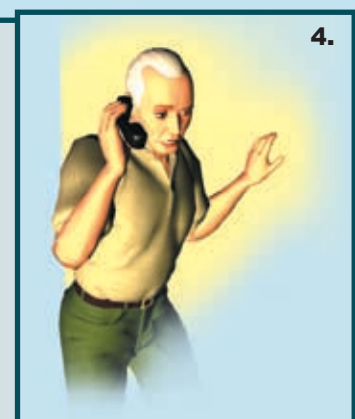
**1.** If you have trouble with your balance at night, be sure to keep a nightlight on or have easy access to lights before you begin to walk.



**2.** Remove all throw rugs and cords, which might be a tripping hazard.



**3.** Remain active throughout the day to maintain your strength and flexibility.



**4.** Seek help promptly for your complaints of dizziness and imbalance, in order to prevent the chance of falling



# FAQ

## How do you know if you are at a risk for falling?

Some common indications include symptoms of dizziness and unsteadiness, recent inactivity, loss of strength or feeling in your legs and loss of confidence with daily activities. Falls are not typically due to a single cause, but a result of a combination of factors.

## Is dizziness just a part of getting older?

Symptoms of dizziness are not normal in any age group and are a sign that there is something wrong. You should have this addressed as soon as possible.

## What is VRT?

Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy is designed to re-train your brain and your balance system, through specially designed exercises, which regain lost balance and help to stop dizziness.

## How will I know if I am a candidate for VRT?

Upon evaluation from your primary physician, local audiologist or physical therapist, it will be determined if your inner ears are involved or if your balance and dizziness are from other causes. This can be determined through specific tests, which look at each aspect of the vestibular system to pinpoint the cause of your dizziness.

## How long will it take until I feel better?

Each person recovers at a different rate, but the average time spent with VRT is between 6 and 12 weeks. By following the advice of your therapist, challenging yourself during treatments and using a home exercise program, you will experience a decrease in overall symptoms.

## Do you need to see a Physical Therapist for your dizziness or imbalance? Take this simple test...

YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you fallen more than once in the past year?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you restrict your daily activities due to dizziness or imbalance?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you feel dizzy or unsteady if you make sudden changes in movement such as bending down or quickly turning?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have a fear of falling or stumbling?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you experienced a stroke or other neurological problem that has affected your balance?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you uncomfortable walking in the dark?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you experience numbness or loss of sensation in your legs and/or feet?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you feel unsteady when you are walking or climbing stairs?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have difficulty sitting down or rising from a seated or lying position?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you inactive? (Answer yes if you do not participate in a regular form of exercise, such as walking or exercising 20-30 minutes at least three times a week.)

## Results:

### Less than 3 Yes:

You're doing fine. Exercising may help keep your balance in check.

### Between 3 and 6 Yes:

Physical Therapy is an option for you.

### More than 6 Yes:

We would advise you to see a doctor to get a better diagnosis. PT is definitely an option.



# Featured Physical Therapist

## Mary Grace Tan, P.T.



Mary grew up in the San Fernando Valley and attended UC Santa Cruz, graduating with a degree in molecular biology. She later attended USC for physical therapy.

Mary has many interests, including surfing, running, spending time with friends, wine tasting, drinking fine coffee and going to Bible study. She is the social event coordinator at Yonemoto Physical Therapy, making sure that birthdays, holidays and other fun events are not missed.

She is one of the therapists that run the Worksteps program here, insuring that workers and jobs match up to prevent workplace injuries. She is also in charge of our wellness programs.

Mary's goals with the patients are to provide the most effective treatment so that they get the biggest bang for their buck.

# SUCCESSSES

## What patients are saying . . .

When I first began therapy, it was difficult to walk, let alone do any activity without feeling like I had no control of my body, balance or thought processes. I have regained much of my physical confidence (and mental) as well as getting my balance in control. The exercises at Yonemoto with my therapists are the reasons I am finally beginning to feel more like myself, both physically and mentally.



—H.G.

to Yonemoto. Within my first four visits my dizzy spells were minimal and after nine visits I was back to my regular life!

—J.M.



with imbalance and dizziness. I am much better now and am not stumbling and falling like I was.

—R.M.



I enjoyed my time at Yonemoto because of two things. The therapists that worked with me on my balance were so thoughtful and helpful and the front desk people were so nice and friendly. I increased

my strength and sense of balance and feel better for that.

—V.L.

For months I suffered from dizziness until I received a referral

When I first came to Yonemoto, I was having lots of problems



# Dizziness & Imbalance

affecting your life?

call today for a **FREE CONSULTATION**

Find out if physical therapy can help you ease the pain and help you gain a new outlook on life.

**626-576-0591**

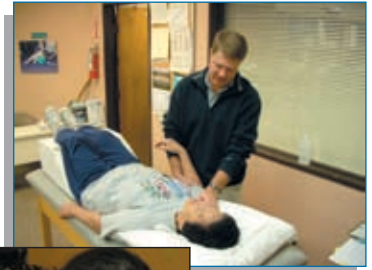


Yonemoto Physical Therapy has successfully treated patients since 1982. We provide several therapy programs ranging from Integrative Manual Therapy, FirstLine Wellness programs, Worksteps which provides services for employers, chi-gong, as well as therapy for common orthopedic problems such as backaches, knee injuries and twisted ankles and pool therapy programs.

Other specialties include orthopedics and sports medicine, TMJ, chronic headaches, Bell's Palsy, urinary incontinence, and low back pain from pregnancy.

We have highly qualified staff trained in methods combining the best from Eastern and Western medicine and philosophies.

Our clinic is open on Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.



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**We can help you recover and achieve Whole Body Health.**

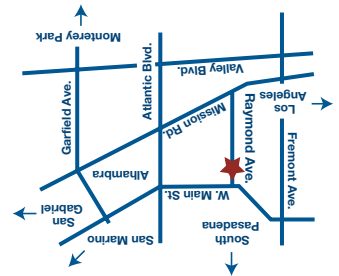
Call us today for a **FREE CONSULTATION** at

**626-576-0591**

[www.yonemoto.com](http://www.yonemoto.com)

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