

Vestibular system

What is the vestibular system?

The vestibular system includes your inner ear. It is a sensory system that lets you know your orientation in space. For example, if you were upside down. The vestibular system tracks the movement of your head position. This helps with your balance.

Vestibular input and Autism

Autistic people are often either under or over processing of vestibular input. People who are hypersensitive to vestibular input might feel movements too strongly, may feel dizzy, and may be avoidant of movements that are a strong source of vestibular input (such as spinning, swinging, jumping etc.). People who are hyposensitive to vestibular input might struggle to identify their orientation in space or feel a difference between different positions or may find that they don't get dizzy. They may seek more intense vestibular input to regulate themselves. Both hypo- and hypersensitive individuals might have trouble with balance and coordination.

How to help

Allowing the use of swiss balls, wobble stools or spinning chairs can help people who have a need for movement.

Engaging in movement based extracurricular activities such as gymnastics, swimming, dancing, etc. can help those who are intense seekers of this kind of input.

Practicing balance can help build confidence.

This resource was written by an autistic author (2024)