

Persistent Postural-Perceptual Dizziness

Author: Lisa Heusel-Gillig, PT, DPT, NCS

Patient Fact Sheet



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Contact us:
ANPT

1935 County Rd. B2 W.
Ste 165
Roseville, MN 55113
Phone: 952.646.2038
info@neuropt.org
www.neuropt.org

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What is Persistent Postural-Perceptual Dizziness (3PD)?

Some people may have dizziness that is constant and hard to describe, and it can get worse with movement or in busy places. It may be triggered by a sudden inner ear event causing the brain to rely more on vision than usual. This problem is called visual vertigo or space motion discomfort. If the person has had these symptoms for more than 3 months, it is called 3PD. A common complaint is feeling uncomfortable while walking in stores or crowds. The lightheaded feeling is better with sitting or lying down in a quiet area.

What can be done about my 3PD symptoms?

Physical therapy can help people with 3PD. PTs can give you exercises for your balance and walking. Therapists will also teach you habituation exercises to help you tolerate movement and visual stimulation. Habituation exercises should increase symptoms only slightly. At first, this type of treatment will be closely supervised by the PT in the clinic. When you do the home exercises, do not do more repetitions than the PT recommends. You need to make sure symptoms return to your baseline before you start the next set. The therapist may use videos that simulate real life activities like riding in a car or walking in a mall or store. If these videos cause mild symptoms, the PT may have you watch them at home for a certain amount of time with rest breaks. The videos and balance/walking exercises should help you return to your normal activities in the community.

Some people may not recover completely with physical therapy. They may need return to their physician for medication or counseling.

What are strategies that can help my 3PD symptoms?

- Go to the same store so you know where items are located
- Go to the store when it is not busy
- Walk on the far right in the mall, so you only have traffic on one side
- Go to restaurants during non-busy times and sit facing a wall
- Sit in the back of the movie theater and close eyes or walk out if symptoms become moderate to severe
- If you are a passenger in a car, pretend like you are the driver
- Try to look away from patterned floors or clothes
- Go for walks every day, outside if possible