

# How to Find a Physical Therapist Skilled in Treating People with Vestibular Disorders

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## Fact Sheet

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All physical therapists receive baseline education on how to treat people with balance and vestibular problems. Some physical therapists, however, have advanced skills and knowledge in vestibular rehabilitation. These specialized therapists can be found in specialty outpatient clinics, in orthopedic or neurological focused outpatient practices, and within inpatient facilities. Advanced training differentiates these clinicians from their peers. Vestibular physical therapists often attend competency-based coursework to advance their knowledge and clinical skills. In addition, many have obtained a nationally recognized board certification (American Physical Therapy Association) in neurology, geriatrics or pediatrics, which requires knowledge of balance and vestibular dysfunction. Those who have successfully passed the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties exam in neurology, geriatrics or pediatrics use these designations as a clinical specialist (NCS, GCS, PCS) after their name.

When making a referral for physical therapy, it is important to determine if the clinic has the necessary experience and equipment to treat balance and vestibular disorders. Key questions to ask include:

- What percentage of the patient population consists of persons with balance and vestibular dysfunction?
- Has the therapist taken any advanced coursework in vestibular rehabilitation?
- Do you have educational materials available to help patients understand their vestibular disorder?
- Do the clinicians have access to infrared goggles or Frenzel lenses to examine eye movements?

Because advanced training is strongly recommended when treating balance and vestibular disorders, it is recommended physicians refer patients to physical therapists for physical therapy or clinical care. Remind your patient to request this therapist by name when scheduling their visit with the office staff, so that they receive the necessary expertise to optimally address their vestibular condition and symptoms.

A list of physical therapists who report experience in treating vestibular disorders can be found at:

[http://www.neuropt.org/map\\_Vestibular/map.html](http://www.neuropt.org/map_Vestibular/map.html) and at  
<https://vestibular.org/healthcare-directory/>.