

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

# Understanding Multiple Sclerosis and Dizziness

## A plain-English guide for patients and families

### What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?

MS is a condition where the body's immune system affects the protective covering around nerves in the brain and spinal cord. When this affects the parts that control balance and eye movements, you can feel dizzy or unsteady, or notice your vision jumping.

**Most important:** Dizziness in MS is common and usually treatable. Not every dizzy spell is a flare — a simple inner-ear problem (BPPV) is a frequent cause and can be fixed in minutes.

### ► Why MS can affect your balance and eyes

The nerves that keep your eyes steady and your balance accurate run through the brainstem and cerebellum — areas MS can affect. When a patch of nerve covering is inflamed, the signals slow down, and the world can seem to spin, sway, or wobble. These episodes often settle as the inflammation eases.

### ► Common symptoms

- Spinning or rocking dizziness (vertigo)
- Unsteadiness when walking, especially in the dark or on uneven ground
- Vision that seems to jump or bounce (called oscillopsia), or double vision
- Symptoms that briefly worsen when you are hot or tired (this is not a new flare)

### ► How it is diagnosed

Your clinician will examine your eye movements and balance, and usually arrange an MRI scan of the brain and spine. Sometimes a test of the spinal fluid is done. These tests confirm the diagnosis and rule out other causes.

### ► Treatments that help

- A sudden, disabling flare is often treated with a short course of steroids.
- Your neurologist may start a longer-term medicine to reduce future flares.
- Balance retraining (vestibular rehabilitation) is one of the most effective treatments for ongoing unsteadiness — and is often under-used.
- Specific tablets can steady jumpy vision; coincident BPPV is fixed with a simple repositioning manoeuvre.

### ► Living well day to day

✓ DO	✗ TRY NOT TO
Keep moving — gentle, regular activity and your balance exercises	Rely on sedative anti-dizziness tablets long-term — they slow recovery
Stay cool and well-rested; pace busy days	Assume every dizzy spell is a flare — get it checked
Use good lighting and handrails at home	Push through to exhaustion or overheat unnecessarily
Bring a list of your dizziness triggers to appointments	Stop your prescribed medicines without advice

### Contact your clinic or doctor urgently if:

You have sudden new weakness, numbness, slurred speech, severe headache, loss of vision, or your dizziness is severe and unrelenting — these need prompt assessment.

### Your outlook — the good news

Most dizzy episodes settle, and balance retraining helps many people feel steadier and more confident. With the right mix of treatments, most people manage their symptoms well and stay active.