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Getting dizzy: There's help for vertigo

BY SHELLEY TERRY

sterry@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — When your balance system goes out of control, it can feel like you're spinning.

A ride on a corkscrew roller-coaster can make anyone a little dizzy. Yet imagine if sights from daily life — like bending over or turning over in bed — left you reeling.

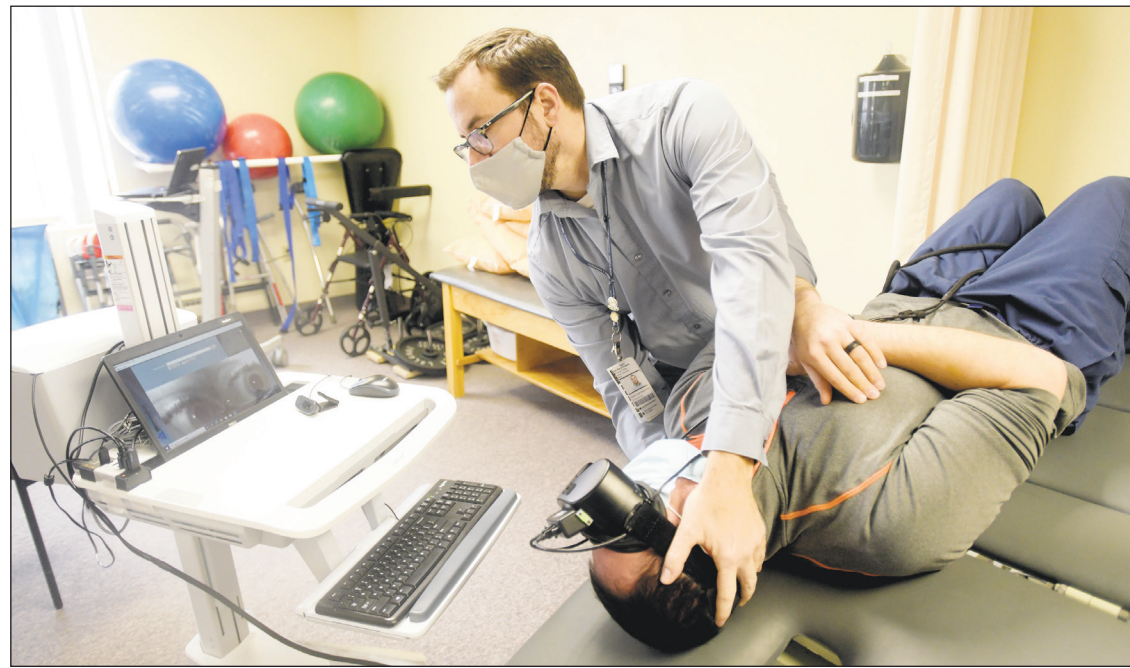
That's how life was for several patients at Ashtabula County Medical Center's Rehabilitation Services.

"Vertigo is a symptom describing a sense of spinning. It is often associated with other symptom descriptions such as light headedness, nausea, imbalance, or disequilibrium," said Jim Pierce-Ruhland, ACMC director of Rehabilitation Services. "Vertigo has many causes. It is important to identify the root cause to optimize outcomes and minimize effects."

Vertigo can come on suddenly or gradually, can range from mildly bothersome to completely debilitating, and can last anywhere from seconds to hours or even days, he said.

Physical Therapists in ACMC's Rehabilitation Services Department specialize in vestibular rehabilitation to treat vertigo.

"We have special tests and equipment to examine a patient's balance, tolerance to movement, and symptom profile and then develop treatment plans based on the root cause of the symptoms," Pierce-Ruhland said. "Our vestibular rehabilitation specialists work to restore prior



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Jim Pierce-Ruhland, director of Ashtabula County Medical Center Rehabilitation Services, top, demonstrates a pair of vestibular goggles used in the diagnosis and treatment of vertigo on physical therapist Andrew Carlin.

levels of function and teach patients strategies to self-treat whenever possible."

Without warning, 15 years ago, the world began to spin around for Emily Smith, 75, of Saybrook Township after driving on the West Virginia Turnpike. She collapsed and had no choice but to lie down until the episode passed.

Smith is not alone. Millions of Americans complain of some sort of balance problem, according to the National Institute of Health.

"It comes on suddenly and makes your head feel like it's spinning," Smith said. "You can't drive and just walking to the bathroom means holding on to the walls and furniture."

A study by the National Institute of Health estimates 11.3 million visits, or

5 to 10 percent of all office visits, involve a complaint of dizziness. About 40 percent of the population over 40 years old will experience a dizziness disorder during their lifetime, according to the study.

But because the body's balance system can go awry in so many ways, diagnosis can be a tricky business, requiring a thorough understanding of how the balance system works.

It's a primitive but complicated system, helping us coordinate our sight and every turn, twist, stoop, start and stop. The heart of the system, the inner ear, uses an elaborate balance organ to sense head movements.

Called the labyrinth, the balance organ consists of three semicircular, fluid-filled

canals that share a common chamber or vestibule.

Patches of nerve cells with hair-like tufts line the canals and vestibule. Those cells funnel into the vestibular nerve, which enters the brain.

The balance organ works when the head is turned. Fluid in the canals washes up against the hair cells, bending their tufts like grass in the wind. This results in impulses that make their way to the balance centers of the brain.

The inner ear can respond to gravity cues as well. Tiny otoliths, "ear stones" made of calcium carbonate, rest on the hair cell tufts. When the head tilts up or down, the otoliths initiate the nerve cells.

The eyes themselves bring in information about movements or tilting in the outside world, while sensors in the

joints and muscles relate the position of the rest of the body to complete the balance information sent to the brain.

All these signals feed into the balance centers of the brain.

These command centers run the show and move the muscles of the eyes, neck and body to keep things steady and allow you to sit, stand or move about.

The balance centers also can irritate the areas of the brain that cause nausea, vomiting and sweating sometimes associated with motion sickness.

When vertigo strikes, Smith takes over-the-counter medication used for sea sickness or for dogs when they travel.

"My dog, Bob, and I take the same meds when we travel," she said. "My vertigo is more sporadic now, mostly after a plane flight or traveling in a car."

True vertigo is a sensation that the patient is spinning or the world is whirling by. Particular positions or head movements, particularly when looking up or down, provoke those feelings.

Distinguishing dizziness from vertigo is complicated and usually goes beyond a simple ear exam. An MRI scan may be used to see if the problem is the result of a serious inner-ear condition. If so, the diagnosis is most likely vertigo.

But whether dizziness or vertigo, treatment will usually include medication, changes in diet and exercises that reposition the head to clear blocked ear canals.

Coronavirus pandemic has taken toll on mental health

BY BRIAN HAYTCHER

bhaytcher@starbeacon.com

Depression and anxiety both increased significantly in 2020 thanks to COVID-19.

Dr. Patrick Runnels, Chief Medical Officer, Population Health-Behavioral Health, with University Hospitals said mental health issues are on the rise due to the pandemic.

Suicide rates, attempted suicide, and drug use have all increased during the pandemic, Runnels said.

"Those are signs on the edges, of the people who are doing the worst," he said.

Runnels said he has

also seen an uptick in people who are seeking behavioral health services.

"That has not translated into overwhelming demand yet, but we are just now starting to filter through stories from people that are having increasingly hard times finding mental health services," he said.

A lot of people are doing worse mentally, Runnels said.

There are a number of contributing factors to the decline in mental health, including social isolation, a reduced number of outlets people use to enjoy themselves, stress and

fear, Runnels said.

Children are also being stressed as well, due to the pandemic.

"Everyone's just more stressed, everyone's more anxious, more people are depressed," he said.

Runnels recommended several things to improve mental wellness.

"Advice about how to be mentally well or to sure up your mental wellness and your defenses against illness are being put out there a lot," Runnels said, "and it's easier said than done for a lot of folks, right? And it also can feel glib. ... I say all that to say it's not easy."

Anything that can be done to prevent social isolation, even through virtual means, is a good first step, Runnels said. That advice is even more important for people who are introverted, and may have been fine with staying home at the beginning of the pandemic, but feel even more isolated now, he said.

For virtual events, smaller groups are better than others, he said.

"People got that wrong," Runnels said. "They organized Zoom parties, and then everyone experienced them as too anonymous and too distant. It's much more useful when it's a

small, intimate group."

Having space to process what you're going through matters a lot, Runnels said. "In trauma therapy, we talk a lot about step one of getting over trauma or resolving trauma is acknowledging how you've changed, and how things have changed and what's different," he said. "It doesn't mean you have to relive every bad moment, but it does mean kind of processing how things are different now. And it's okay to process things that are different in a not good way."

Having people to commiserate with is

helpful, he said.

Finding space to separate your days from stressful work days to relaxation is important, Runnels said. Some people who work from home get in their cars and drive a few blocks, he said.

Runnels recommended planning for good things after the pandemic.

"For some people that means planning a vacation a year from now, when it will definitely be safe," Runnels said. "For other people, it means just planning for when they're going to go over to their

SEE **PANDEMIC**, 6

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Diabetes and how physical therapy can help reverse the disease

BY DR. CELINE POLLANDER
Special to Star Beacon

Across the United States, millions of Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes, and with that diagnosis

comes a multitude of secondary issues including weakness, shortness of breath, fatigue, lower activity tolerance, pain, reduced feeling in hands and feet, trouble with day to day tasks,

and gradually reduced balance affecting your ability to walk and run. Not only that, but those suffering from diabetes are more likely to suffer from strokes and develop heart disease over time, and are at an overall increased risk of developing liver failure than any other disease.

Although many suffer from this debilitating disease, not many are aware of the various venues that offer true guidance and solutions, as opposed to “quick fixes” that do not address the long-term issues at hand. Physical therapy is key in managing your diabetes, and the avenues are endless with each plan of care personalized for the individual. At MyoFit Clinic we offer a multidimensional physical therapy platform that allows focus on the entire person as a whole, and not simply the current and superficial complications. Type II diabetes can be completely reversed through a combination of physical therapy, nutritional guidance and by having a specific plan with your primary care physician which normally includes medication to help stabilize your blood sugars.

The end goal of physical therapy is to normalize blood glucose levels in order to reduce your risk of developing further complications and diseases. You will also



Physical therapy can help diabetics lead healthier lives.

see improved cholesterol levels and reduce blood pressure. To do this, physical therapy services at MyoFit Clinic assist in monitoring your vitals through safe and effective therapy regimens that focus on reducing overall pain, strengthening muscles, improving bone mineral density, increasing joint range of motion, improving balance and working on safe walking abilities in order to reduce risk of falls and subsequent injury.

If you are having difficulties performing activities at home such

as doing dishes, lifting groceries, working on a computer, cleaning, or simply walking from one room to another without losing balance, physical therapy services at MyoFit Clinic help focus on specific activity-related therapy treatments to assist in getting your independence back. In addition, it boosts your mood and emotional health, reduces stress, and improves sleep quality. Don't wait until you can't perform or have difficulty performing an activity, get ahead of the curve with physical

therapy.

At MyoFit Clinic, we see a lot of individuals suffering from diabetes, where they gradually start to limit their activity because of fear of falling, shortness of breath, pain and numbness. These in return create significant loss of balance and the ability to safely move. Everything we do relies heavily on our ability to balance, yet maintaining physical balance skills is one of the most underrated aspects of well-being and one of the easiest to improve upon. As we age, we gradually start to lose our muscle strength, vision and sensory perception. For individuals with type II diabetes, these effects tend to happen faster and come out of nowhere. Once your balance and mobility is compromised it can lead to falling which most likely could result in injury and hospitalization.

The good news is that physical therapy treatment with the Doctors of Physical Therapy at MyoFit Clinic can improve your walking, strength and balance fast while reducing pain and numbness. Balance is a learned skill that can be improved by participating in a physical therapy balance program with exercises that will

SEE **DIABETES**, 5



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How to approach diet after a diabetes diagnosis

Diabetes affects hundreds of millions of people across the globe, and more and more people are being diagnosed with this often preventable disease every year.

According to the World Health Organization, 108 million people across the globe were living with diabetes in 1980. In 2019, the International Diabetes Foundation estimated that 463 million adults between the ages of 20 and 79 were living with diabetes. Perhaps

even more troubling is that the IDF estimates that, by 2045, 700 million people will be living with diabetes.

A diabetes diagnosis can be scary. The IDF reports that people with diabetes have an increased risk of developing an assortment of serious health problems, including diseases that affect the heart, eyes, kidneys, nerves, and teeth.

Poor diet is a common contributor to diabetes. So it's natural that newly diagnosed diabetes patients

typically want to know how they can alter their diets so they can begin to overcome their disease. That's a good place to start, as the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases notes that eating well and being physically active can help people prevent or delay problems associated with diabetes. The NIDDK notes that eating a variety of healthy foods from all food groups is essential for people with diabetes.

· Vegetables: Broccoli,

carrots, greens, peppers, and tomatoes are examples of nonstarchy vegetables that make great additions to everyone's diet. These vegetables can be especially beneficial for people diagnosed with diabetes, as can starchy vegetables like potatoes, corn and green peas.

· Fruits: Diabetes patients can include oranges, melon, berries, apples, bananas, and grapes in their daily diets.

· Grains: Whole grains should make up no less

than 50 percent of diabetics' daily grain intake. Opt for whole-grain breads, pastas, cereals, and tortillas.

· Protein: Lean cuts of meat, chicken or turkey without the skin, fish, and eggs are some examples of healthy protein sources that diabetes patients can include in their diets. Nuts and peanuts; dried beans and certain peas, such as chickpeas and split peas; and meat substitutes like tofu can make for healthy protein sources as well.

DIABETES: How physical therapy can help reverse the disease

FROM PAGE 4

strengthen your proprioception. Which basically means by performing specific exercises tailored to our own physical needs, it can help the body to better position your muscles and allow you to sense where your body needs to be without looking.

In addition, practicing balance builds muscle and increases range of motion in the joints, which helps in distributing weight evenly, creating overall stability and reducing risk for falls. Not only will your balance improve by performing balance exercises but it will also increase your bone

density, improve circulation, improve ability to walk without a cane or walker and improve brain function.

If you or someone you know is suffering from this debilitating disease, physical therapy is a fantastic first step in not only managing your health, but getting your life back on track.

It gives you the ability to gradually return to independent home and work duties, recreational activities, and enjoying that precious time with family we all so desperately crave. Physical therapy gives you the tools and confidence to tackle this disease head-on, and gives you the ability

to manage and reduce your symptoms safely so that you can take control of your life once again and not allow it to take control of you. Physical therapy at MyoFit Clinic is covered by all medical insurances including Medicare and Medicaid, no referral is required to receive physical therapy treat-

ment. Call MyoFit Clinic today to take control of your health and to find out how physical therapy can help you!

Dr. Celine Pollander, PT, DPT, is a licensed physical therapist and balance specialist at MyoFit Clinic in Ashtabula. Call 440-993-1004 to find out more and for a consultation.

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How people can work at staying healthy

BY WARREN DILLAWAY
warren@starbeacon.com

ASHTABULA — New members at the Ashtabula County YMCA can go it alone, or get some help, as they seek to walk, ride or run the road to better health.

ACYMCA Executive Director Trevor Sprague said consultations are offered to new members.

"We offer free nutrition and fitness [meetings]," he said.

"The initial appointment is 30 minutes but you can have as many follow-up [appointments] of 15 minutes as you like," Sprague said.

"It is also important that we offer income based pricing. We want access to everyone."

Sprague said an estimated 10 to 15 percent of new members use the service.

"We wish more people would take advantage," he said.

Many new members know what they want to do to improve their fitness and over time often find accountability in becoming instructors. He said personal trainers are also available for people who want to go to the next level or train for something specific.

"We have a lot of members who have stepped up to teach

classes. They like that accountability because it makes them do their exercise routine," Sprague said.

June Parmarter, director of Wellness Initiatives for Ashtabula County Medical Center, said the first step in starting a fitness program is to make contact with your primary care provider.

"It is important to have a thorough physical and exam to get an accurate picture of where you are health wise before you start and exercise and nutrition program.

"Once you have been cleared by your physician to proceed with a program the next step would be to meet with a fitness professional to help you get started," Parmarter said. She said Premiere Fitness uses 3-D imaging software that visually



WARREN DILLAWAY | STAR BEACON

Margie Bort, left, a volunteer at the Ashtabula County YMCA, wipes down machinery. The YMCA re-opened in June after being closed for two months due to the coronavirus pandemic. A variety of fitness options are available at the YMCA.

shows what you will look like when you achieve your physical goals.

"In addition, it conducts a health risk and health age assessment," she said.

Parmarter said it helps the person to get by any impatience to see potential results and expected times to achieve the goal.

A key point to success is staying on track once a goal is set.

"Accountability is extremely important to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. There are several ways you can accomplish this," Parmarter said.

A personal trainer is one route to take.

"A personal trainer can guide you through a workout specifically designed for your needs, capabilities and individual goals," Parmarter said.

"Working out with

a friend or joining a group fitness class will also help keep you accountable," Parmarter said. She said it is important to make fitness a priority and to schedule exercise like you would schedule any other important part of a day.

She said Premiere Fitness offers online work-outs, Facebook fitness classes and "Zoom Lunch and Learn" events.



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PANDEMIC: Coronavirus has taken toll on mental health

FROM PAGE 3

mom's for dinner. And that future-looking hopefulness is a great tonic. Planning actually is as therapeutic as the actual event for people, and it's a tonic

to remind you of when things are going to be OK."

Runnels said people should take time every day to think of one good thing that has happened to them that day, and intentionally

being generous to other people in any way they can.

"Be easy on yourself, be easy on other people," Runnells said. "Everyone's doing the best they can in a bad situation. No one is the

best version of themselves right now, no one. And I would repeat that 20 times. No one is the best version of themselves. Everyone's compromised. That's OK. It doesn't mean we're bad."



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