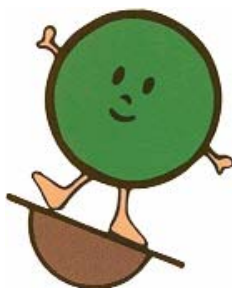


# VESTIBULAR SYSTEM

THE RECEPTORS FOR THE VESTIBULAR SYSTEM ARE LOCATED IN THE INNER EAR, AND ARE STIMULATED BY MOVEMENT OF THE HEAD AND INPUT FROM OTHER SENSES. THIS SYSTEM TELLS US WHERE OUR BODY IS IN SPACE. IT LETS US KNOW THE QUALITY OF OUR MOVEMENTS, AND TELLS US IF ITS OUR BODY OR THE ENVIRONMENT THAT IS MOVING

## Using the Vestibular System to Change Levels of Arousal

The vestibular system plays a very important part in our ability to interact with the environment. It tells us how and where we are moving. This system is responsible for letting us know if our movements are up, down, fast, slow, angular or circular. Think about times when you have been dizzy, and the whole room seemed to be spinning— now imagine trying to negotiate a crowded hallway when you are dizzy and unable to accurately perceive the information about your own movement. Similar to other senses, people can be over or under reactive to vestibular input. A hypersensitive person might avoid any type of movement that accentuates input, while a hyposensitive person might try dare-devil movements to increase input. Generally, slow, rhythmic back and forth or up and down move-



ments are more calming. Quick, unpredictable, or circular movements are more alerting. Difficulty accurately registering vestibular input can affect activities such as walking in the hallway, sitting in your chair, participating in PE, attending to and completing classwork or joining games at recess. Children who seek vestibular input are often more easily visible in the classroom setting. Frequent opportunities for sensory input helps them organize and prepare

## Alerting Activities

- Jumping on a trampoline or doing jumping jacks
- Hanging upside down by the knees on the jungle gym
- Riding a scooter down a ramp
- Sitting and bouncing on a therapy ball
- Standing and twirling in a circle
- Bending over with head between legs
- Changing positions
- Doing somersaults and cartwheels

## Calming Activities

- Jumping on a trampoline or doing jumping jacks
- Swinging on a playground swing
- Rocking in a rocking chair
- Sitting on a teeter-totter
- Rolling slowly back and forth in a barrel
- Take a break to do an errand for the teacher
- Swinging in a hammock



## Hints for Vestibular Sensory Input

- ▣ Fast, unpredictable movement is ALERTING
- ▣ Slower, rhythmic movement is CALMING
- ▣ The need for vestibular movement is unique to each individual
- ▣ Honor each individual's need to seek or avoid vestibular input