

## **VERTIGO-DIZZINESS**

Is Your Life Spinning Uncontrollably? You Have A Choice!

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Vertigo is one of the most common health problems in adults. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), about 40% of people in the United States experience feeling dizzy at least once during their lifetime. Vertigo affects adults young and old and can occur with out any warning. It is a frightening experience to say the least.

### **WHAT IS VERTIGO**

Vertigo, or dizziness, is a symptom, not a disease. The term vertigo refers to the sensation of spinning or whirling that occurs as a result of a disturbance in balance (equilibrium). It also may be used to describe feelings of dizziness, lightheadedness, faintness, and unsteadiness. The sensation of movement is called subjective vertigo and the perception of movement in surrounding objects is called objective vertigo.

Vertigo usually occurs as a result of a disorder in the vestibular system (i.e., structures of the inner ear, the vestibular nerve, brainstem, and cerebellum). The vestibular system is responsible for integrating sensory stimuli and movement and for keeping objects in visual focus as the body moves.

### **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VERTIGO AND DIZZINESS**

What Is Dizziness? Some people describe a balance problem by saying they feel dizzy, lightheaded, unsteady, or giddy. This feeling of imbalance or dysequilibrium, without a sensation of turning or spinning, is sometimes due to an inner ear problem.

What Is Vertigo? A few people describe their balance problem by using the word vertigo, which comes from the Latin verb "to turn". They often say that they or their surroundings are turning or spinning. Vertigo is frequently due to an inner ear problem.

- SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS
- A sense that you or your surroundings are spinning or moving (vertigo)
- A loss of balance
- Unsteadiness
- Nausea

- Wooziness
- Lightheadedness
- Faintness
- Weakness
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Blurred vision after quick head movements

## **CAUSES**

Vertigo is the most common form of dizziness but it is a symptom not a disease itself. Although dizziness can have many causes, true vertigo is usually due to a problem in the inner ear, when the nerves and the structures of the balance mechanism in your inner ear (vestibular system), which sense movement and changes in your head position are not functioning correctly.

Normal balance requires the integration of three sensory systems: visual, vestibular (found in the inner ear), and somatosensory (sensations from the skin, muscles, tendons and joints) -- in addition to muscle strength. The central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord) processes all the bits of information from the three systems to make some coordinated sense out of it all. The symptoms of motion sickness and dizziness appear when the central nervous system receives conflicting messages from the three systems and when these systems are not functioning well, individuals may experience episodes of spinning, light-headedness, trouble focusing their eyes and/or poor balance or falls.

### **Loss of balance (disequilibrium)**

Disequilibrium is the loss of balance or the feeling of unsteadiness when you walk.

#### **Causes may include:**

- Inner ear (vestibular) problems. Abnormalities with your inner ear can cause you to feel like you are floating, have a heavy head or are unsteady in the dark.
- Sensory disorders. Failing vision and nerve damage in your legs (peripheral neuropathy) are common in older adults and may result in difficulty maintaining your balance.
- Joint and muscle problems. Muscle weakness and osteoarthritis — the type of arthritis that involves wear and tear of your joints — can contribute to loss of balance when it involves your weight-bearing joints.
- Medications. Loss of balance can be a side effect of certain medications, such as anti-seizure drugs, sedatives and tranquilizers

Vertigo can be associated with certain medical conditions such as diabetes and poor blood circulation, Injury to the head or neck that damages the inner ear can result in severe vertigo symptoms. Infections and viruses can attack the inner ear and its nerve connections, in the case of bacterial infections there can sometimes be permanent damage.

## **WHO IS AT RISK**

Vertigo affects adults and generally women are more prone to vertigo than men. Aging can also affect balance. Approximately 40 percent of people older than age 65 fall each year. People with viruses, flu, colds that affect the inner ear, but these vertigo symptoms usually disappear when the infections clear up. People who have impaired blood circulation, head trauma or neck injury.

## **TRADITIONAL TREATMENTS**

Depending on what is the underlying cause of the vertigo symptoms will determine the course of treatment. In some instances medicine will be prescribed, as well as test, Xrays, CT or MRI scans. Hearing test might be required, blood test or cardiology evaluation might be recommended.

Optional treatments would be Vestibular Rehabilitation, which is an exercise program designed by specially trained therapists to help compensate for a loss or imbalance within the vestibular system. Vestibular Rehabilitation can offer relief of symptoms for persons suffering from an inner ear disorder. Fall prevention is a very important part of vestibular rehabilitation

## **WHY TRY PHYSICAL THERAPY FIRST**

### **PATIENT COMMENTS**

### **DOCTOR'S COMMENT**

## **References**

Sources come from one or more of the following articles and sites:

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