



What is vertigo?

Vertigo is a type of dizziness. It is described as a 'spinning' feeling in the head that is often brought on by sudden changes of head position.

Causes

The most common cause of vertigo is called benign positional proximal vertigo (BPPV).

BPPV occurs when the tiny particles in the balance centre of the inner ear are disturbed. This is commonly caused by sudden movement, which results in a spinning sensation. It is a common problem that can affect people of all ages.

Causes can vary but often involve moving your head into a certain position suddenly. These can include:

- Looking up
- Lying on one ear
- Rolling over in bed
- Getting out of bed
- Bending over

There are also other causes of vertigo including head injuries, stroke, circulation problems, infections, inner ear disorders, and degeneration of inner ear structures.



Symptoms

- Dizziness that begins seconds after certain head movement and lasts less than a minute.
- Feeling light-headed
- Nausea – feeling like you want to vomit
- Impaired balanced

Symptoms generally improve once you are in a different position.

Pain, tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and deafness are not common.

Note: if you have more serious symptoms including but not limited to – speech difficulty, double vision, unsteady gait (walking), difficulty swallowing, altered sensation and/or strength in your arms or leg, ringing in the ears or deafness – you should seek medical assistance.

Treatment/Advice

BPPV treatment can include:

- Physiotherapy – Epley Manoeuvre.
- Special exercises – Brandt-Daroff exercises (see attached)
- Medication – motion sickness medication can often assist with nausea but it will not prevent vertigo attacks
- Avoid provoking head positions and movements
- Do not sleep on the affected side
- Elevate (raise) the head on two pillows when sleeping

- In the morning take time to raise from bed slowly
- Do not drive until symptoms have resolved completely

What to expect

- The episodes usually come in bursts. If the exercises are done regularly, the symptoms should settle over 10 days, however it can take longer.
- Most people return to normal activities within a week.
- About one in three people will have a new attack within a year.
- While the attacks cause discomfort there is usually no long-term damage.

Brandt-Daroff Exercises

These exercises are to disperse any tiny particles away from the balance centre in your ear, therefore eliminating the cause of your dizziness.

You may be anxious that the exercises reproduce your symptoms. This is normal. However, **the exercises will only work if you feel dizzy as you do them.** The dizziness will decrease with time.

Process:

1. Sit on the edge of the bed. Turn your head 45 degrees to the left. Quickly lie down on your right side. Ensure the back of your head rests on the bed. Wait 20-30 seconds for the dizziness to stop.
2. Sit upright. Wait 20-30 seconds for the dizziness to stop.
3. Repeat on the other side. Turn the head 45 degrees to the right before quickly lying on your left side.
4. Complete 5 times each side (takes about 10 minutes).
5. Repeat three times per day.

