

## The Most Common Cause of Vertigo

Have you ever had the feeling that you or the world around you was spinning, even though you knew it was still? As children we experience this when we spin around gleefully then stop suddenly, intentionally making ourselves dizzy. Hard as we try to stand up straight, we teeter and tilt as the world continues to spin around us. There we are, standing up straight, but we FEEL as though we're still spinning. That feeling is called vertigo.

Vertigo experienced as part of a child's game or after an amusement park ride is fun for many people. However, experiencing unexpected vertigo due to a medical condition can be quite scary. The interesting fact is that having vertigo as an adult is actually very common. There are many causes of vertigo that have been documented in medical studies. Mostly, it is due to one inner condition or another. Sometimes, vertigo is caused by problems in other parts of the body, such as the brain or arteries.

The single most common cause of vertigo is an inner ear condition called Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV, for short). Have you ever laid down or rolled over in bed to find that the room began to swirl around you for several seconds? Have you ever tipped your head back to look up at a high shelf, or bent over to pick up something off the floor and found yourself disoriented because of a sudden feeling of movement you didn't expect? These are common symptoms reported by people with BPPV.

BPPV occurs when small bits of debris from one part of the inner ear settle in another part of the inner ear where they don't belong. Certain head movements, like the ones mentioned above, cause the debris to slide around in the wrong part of the inner ear. This sends an "error" signal to the brain, causing vertigo. Often, the vertigo lasts several seconds until the moving debris settle again. If another head movement causes the debris to stir, vertigo will happen again.

Fortunately, BPPV can be treated by what is called a canalith repositioning maneuver. Basically, this is a series of precise head movements that are designed to coax the out-of-place debris into a part of the inner where they will not cause vertigo and where they will eventually dissolve. There are many variations of these maneuvers based on where the out-of-place debris are located within the inner ear.

If you have vertigo, it's best to talk to your doctor about it immediately. Vertigo caused by BPPV can cause dangerous falls. Also, as mentioned earlier in this article, vertigo can be a sign of a serious medical issue. Although it's most common for it to be due to a treatable inner ear condition, it makes sense to keep yourself safe by receiving prompt medical attention.

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