

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo

What is vertigo?

Vertigo is a sensation or experience of movement, when there is no movement actually present, most often felt as the room spinning (giddiness, or dizziness). It can be caused by any disturbance to the inner ear's balance system.

What causes vertigo?

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is one of the most common forms of vertigo and is usually brought on by sudden changes in position.

BPPV occurs when there is a disturbance to the otoliths in the inner ear's balance system. These are small crystals which can become dislodged and cause symptoms of vertigo. This may occur on its own, or after head trauma.

The condition is called benign as it does not cause serious harm.

Spontaneous BPPV is more common in people over the age of 40, and in women.

Symptoms of vertigo due to BPPV are brought on by a particular head position or movement. The vertigo comes on suddenly, but resolves within a minute if you remain completely still. The vertigo is often associated with nausea (which may last hours), and sometimes vomiting. The attack will gradually resolve over a few days (or rarely, weeks).

Vertigo which is present continuously, or together with ringing in the ears (tinnitus) or deafness is not common in BPPV. If you have these symptoms then tell your doctor.

Other causes of vertigo include head injuries, viral infections, inner ear disorders or degeneration and, for some, no cause is identified.

Diagnosis

To obtain a diagnosis, your doctor will ask you to describe your symptoms in detail. The doctor will also perform some tests while examining you which provoke the symptoms (if tolerated). This can help to establish the diagnosis and also which side is causing the problem. The tests can be inconclusive so follow up with your doctor is important.

Treatment

In most cases the symptoms will simply get better after an attack or resolve over several weeks, but it can be both severely acute and prolonged in some people.

If BPPV is an ongoing problem you may be offered options including:

- Epley Repositioning Manoeuvre – this will be performed by your doctor if appropriate
- Rest and sedation (mild sedatives used)
- Antinausea medications may be given but do not treat the cause
- Special exercises to do at home including the Brandt Daroff (see overleaf).

You may also be referred to a specialist doctor for further treatment.

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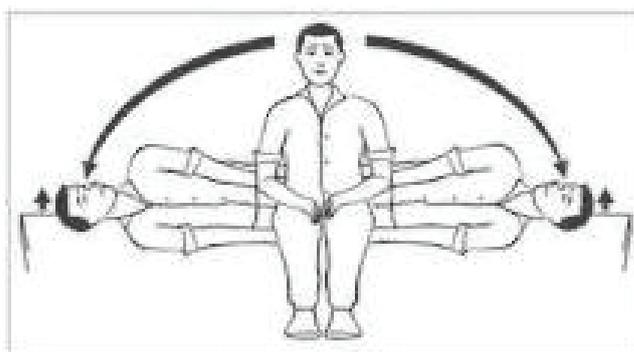
What can I do at home?

- Avoid head positions that provoke an attack
- Do the **Brandt-Daroff** exercises, as instructed
- Avoid sleeping on the affected or 'bad' side
- Elevate (raise) your head on two pillows when resting
- In the morning get up slowly and sit on the edge of the bed for a minute
- Take prescribed medications as directed
- Do not drive.

Instructions:

Brandt-Daroff exercises

These are a series of movements that you can do by yourself at home to help resolve BPPV. These exercises can be unpleasant, because they make you feel dizzy, but this means they are working.



- Sit on the edge of the bed
- Turn your head to the left 45 degrees
- Lie down quickly on the right side
- Wait 20–30 seconds or until the dizziness stops
- Sit upright
- Wait 20–30 seconds for any dizziness to settle
- Repeat on the other side, turning head to the right lying on the left
- Repeat cycle 5 times over about 10 minutes.

Seeking help:

 In a medical emergency go to your nearest emergency department or call 000

