

Vertigo

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Vertigo is a type of dizziness where you feel like the world is spinning. Nausea and vomiting are common and you may feel unsteady. Often vertigo is eased by lying down and made worse by sitting up or moving. It's not the same as simply feeling faint, dizzy or lightheaded when getting up. Vertigo can be very disabling.

Causes of vertigo

Vertigo can have many causes. The most common is from a disturbance of the vestibular system, the part of the inner ear and brain that controls balance and maintains eye focus during movement. Special sensors in the inner ear send messages back to the brain that help you maintain balance and focus. Common causes for vestibular system problems include:

- Illness or disease
- Certain medications
- Head trauma (e.g., car accidents, falls, impact sports)
- Aging
- Stroke and/or brain injury
- Ear infections (neuritis, labyrinthitis)

How physiotherapists help

Physiotherapists specifically trained to assess and treat vestibular problems are highly skilled at treating vertigo. Research demonstrates vestibular rehabilitation improves balance, decreases dizziness/vertigo symptoms and increases general activity levels.

Getting an accurate diagnosis is important for effective treatment. If your condition is suitable for vestibular rehabilitation, a physiotherapist may include one or all of the following:

- Balance retraining exercises
- Specific exercises for the vestibular system
- Special repositioning maneuver for vertigo caused by the crystals in the inner ear becoming stuck
- Challenges to the vestibular, visual and balance systems
- Home program of individualized vestibular exercises

Your physiotherapist will:

- Take a careful history to determine the type of vertigo
- Screen for conditions requiring medical follow-up
- Assess your balance and co-ordination
- Complete a full examination of your nervous system
- Test your vestibular system using special eye and head movement testing

Often improvement or complete resolution of symptoms can be achieved within six to eight weeks.



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