

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo

Inner ear problem that makes you feel dizzy when you move your head

General Information

Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo is a common inner ear problem. It causes you to feel dizzy when you move your head in certain positions such as:

- lying down
- turning in bed
- sitting up in bed
- bending forward
- looking up.

This condition is also known as BPPV.

What BPPV Feels Like

The dizziness you feel is called vertigo. It can:

- come and go
- usually last less than 1 minute
- be mild to intense
- make you feel lightheaded, off balance and feel like throwing up.

What Causes BPPV

Small crystals in your inner ear loosen and move into the wrong area of your inner ear. When you move your head, the crystals move and causes a nerve to tell your brain you are still moving even when you stop.

This can happen in cases of head trauma or infection, but in most instances the cause is not known.

How BPPV is Treated

Your physical therapist will talk with you about a maneuver to move the crystals to their original spot. He or she will do this maneuver. Do not try to do it on your own.

The number of times you need treatment depends on how much vertigo you have.

After Treatment

Right after treatment you may:

- have an upset stomach
- feel off balance for a few hours or days.

The rest of the day do not:

- do any activity that could cause you to fall
- tip your head too far in any direction
- lie on the side your physical therapist performed the maneuver
- lie flat when you sleep.

The next day you may:

- return to your normal activities
- move your head as you normally would.

When To Call Your Physical Therapist

Call your physical therapist if the vertigo comes back or if your symptoms get worse.