

Vertigo

With vertigo you might feel like your head is spinning or whirling, or you might feel like the room is spinning. Vertigo can make it hard to stand or walk and you may feel off balance. It can also make you feel sick to your stomach (nauseated).



Some reasons for vertigo:

- + Turning your head quickly.
- + Viral illness such as a cold or the flu.
- + Some medicines.
- + A head injury or pressure in the head.
- + Drugs or alcohol or a combination of both.
- + Certain medical conditions like stroke.
- + Inner ear problems (infection, etc.).

HOW IS VERTIGO TREATED?

Vertigo usually gets better by itself or is easily treated. Sometimes, it is a sign of a medical condition. Treatment depends on what is causing the vertigo. Your doctor might arrange for some tests to help find the cause.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

When you feel unwell:

- + Lie down for a minute or two, or until the feeling goes away.
- + When you lie down, lie down with your head raised up on a pillow. Lying flat on your back can make your vertigo worse.
- + Take slow, deep breaths.
- + Sit up slowly and stay sitting for 1 to 2 minutes before standing.
- + Stand up slowly.
- + Move slowly. When you turn, try to move your whole body and not just your head.
- + Take medication as directed.

For your safety, for one (1) week after your symptoms have gone away:

- + DO NOT drive.
- + DO NOT operate large machinery.
- + DO NOT climb ladders or do other activities involving height.

To prevent falls or other injuries:

- + Keep your home free of tripping hazards such as area rugs and exposed electrical cords.
- + Use nonslip mats in your bath or shower.
- + Hold handrails when going up or down stairs.
- + Use a walking support such as a cane, walker or a wall.

WHEN TO GET HELP

Go to the nearest Emergency Department

if you are dizzy AND:

- + You have weakness or numbness in one of your arms or legs.
- + You are unable to walk.
- + You are seeing double.
- + You have trouble speaking or you are slurring your words.
- + You have a severe headache.
- + You have a stiff neck
- + You cannot stop throwing up (vomiting).

See your family doctor if you are experiencing any of the following:

- + Your vertigo does not go away after one week.
- + Your vertigo comes and goes and it is affecting your everyday activities.
- + You notice a change in your hearing.

TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in ___ days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:

www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/vertigo/