

What's Making Me Dizzy?

What is dizziness?

Dizziness is one of the most common reasons people visit their doctors. It may make you feel off-balance, wobbly, lightheaded, or like you might faint. Vertigo is a type of dizziness that makes you feel like things are moving or spinning around you when you are not moving. Dizziness can make it harder for you to do normal activities. Talk to your doctor if it starts suddenly or you don't have times between dizzy spells when you feel normal.

What causes it?

Dizziness is usually not caused by anything serious. It's most often caused by anxiety or problems in your inner ear. Heart or nervous system problems are possible, but these are rare. If your dizziness doesn't let up between spells, it may be due to a stroke, or might mean that a stroke is about to happen. This is quite rare. Some medicines can cause dizziness. Tell your doctor what medicines you are taking so they can be adjusted or changed, if needed.

How do I know if I have it?

Your doctor will ask you to describe how your dizziness feels, when it happens, if it happens only when you're in certain positions, what makes it worse, and what makes it better. He or she may do some movement tests. Your doctor may place your body in different positions to see what makes you dizzy. He or she will check your blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing.

How is it treated?

It depends on the cause and your symptoms. Medicines can sometimes make the symptoms better. Medicines can also treat the cause of dizziness.

Your doctor may want you to drink more water or do certain head and neck exercises. Go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhinu_oU_hM or follow the instructions in this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqokxZRbJfw&NR=1>.

It is important to treat dizziness, if possible, because you are more likely to fall if you are dizzy. You are also more likely to have a car accident if you drive while you are dizzy.

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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