

# Vertigo (BPPV)

Fact Sheet



BPPV or *Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo*, is a relatively common problem. This can cause motion provoked vertigo- a sensation of spinning of the room or of yourself. Tiny particles in the balance centre of the inner ears are disturbed from their normal place and relocate into one of the semicircular canals.

When you move your head in a certain position, these particles move the fluid in the canal and because there is a mismatch of signals from one ear to the other it invokes a reflex which causes the spinning sensation. The spinning sensation can be delayed for a few seconds and usually lasts less than 30 seconds.

Common movements such as rolling over in bed, looking up, getting up from lying and bending over can cause the spinning sensation.

As well as the spinning sensation you may also have some problems with balance and nausea- *feeling like you are going to vomit*.

Your treatment today is aimed at getting these particles out of the canal and back into the correct chamber where they will have no effect on the balance. Usually it takes only one treatment

## **Why did the physio check out my eyes?**

The inner ear and movement of the eyes are very closely linked.

Your Physio does a thorough assessment of the way your eyes move to exclude other causes of vertigo other than BPPV.

BPPV can present in different ways and your physio will do some positioning tests of the head to determine where the displaced particles are.

The particles can be:

- In one of three canals
- On the right or left side
- Free floating in the canal
- Stuck to the far end of the canal.

## **Why did the physio make me spin?**

Your physio needs to put you in a position that makes the particles move- to find out where they are.

This will reproduce the vertigo.

Your Physio can then perform the most effective manoeuvre to reposition the particles out of the affected canal. Normally only one manoeuvre is required.

You may feel a little unsettled after the assessment and manoeuvre, especially if you are sensitive to motion. You may still get some mild feeling of imbalance with some head movement after the treatment but the spinning sensation should cease.

Within a few days you will feel better and you should have no further episodes of vertigo. You can recommence normal activities when you feel able. Often normal movement and activity will help you regain your sense of balance and wellbeing a little quicker. Generally you will be better in upright positions.

Your Physio will reassess you in a week to retest for BPPV and make sure that the particles are repositioned out of the canal. In rare cases there may be more than one canal affected and you may need retreatment.

**Contact your physiotherapist, your doctor or the hospital if you:**

- are getting sustained or more frequent attacks of vertigo
- develop speech or swallowing difficulties
- develop facial, arm or leg weakness or numbness.

