



Dizziness & Vertigo

Dizziness is feeling lightheaded. It is a symptom of another condition. Vertigo is a spinning feeling. It affects the inner ear, the brain's gravity-and-motion detector.

Dizziness Chart		
Signs & Symptoms	What It Could Be	What to Do
Sudden dizziness with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hot, dry, red skin ■ High fever. No sweating. ■ Pulse that is rapid and then gets weak ■ Exposure to very, very hot conditions 	Heat stroke	Get immediate care. Follow "Immediate Care" guidelines at www.HealthyLearn.com .
Dizziness with "Stroke Warning Signs" (see at www.HealthyLearn.com)	Stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA)	Follow "Immediate Care" guideline at www.HealthyLearn.com .
Dizziness with "Heart Attack Warning Signs" (see at www.HealthyLearn.com)	Heart Attack	Follow "Immediate Care" guidelines at www.HealthyLearn.com .
Dizziness with a heart rate greater than 130 beats per minute or less than 50 beats per minute or an irregular heart rhythm	Irregular heartbeat	Get immediate care.
Dizziness with "Signs & Symptoms" of dehydration (see at www.HealthyLearn.com)	Dehydration	Get immediate care.
Dizziness with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Abdominal pain and swelling that worsen ■ Inability to pass stool or gas ■ Vomiting 	Intestinal obstruction	Get immediate care.

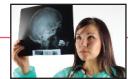
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Dizziness & Vertigo, Continued

Dizziness Chart, Continued		
Signs & Symptoms	What It Could Be	What to Do
Dizziness and fainting. Severe chest pain with extreme pain felt across the upper back (not just on one side) that came on within 15 minutes for no apparent reason, such as an injury or back strain. The pain can spread to the abdomen.	Dissecting aortic aneurysm. This is a tear in the main artery from the heart.	Get immediate care. (Do not take aspirin.)
Dizziness with ear pain, ringing in the ear, pus or other ear discharge, fever	Ear infection	Contact doctor. See “Earaches” at www.HealthyLearn.com .
Dizziness with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ True spinning sensation ■ Loss of balance ■ Nausea and vomiting ■ Ringing in the ears ■ Jerky movements of the eye 	Labyrinthitis. This is an inflammation in the ear that usually results from an upper respiratory infection.	Contact doctor.
Dizziness with hunger, sweating, trembling, anxiety, and confusion	Low blood sugar. This can occur in persons taking insulin or oral pills for diabetes and/or after not eating for 4 or more hours.	Use self-care. (See “Self-Care” in “Diabetes” and “Self-Care/ First Aid for a Low Blood Sugar Reaction” at www.HealthyLearn.com .)

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Dizziness & Vertigo, Continued

Dizziness Chart, Continued

Signs & Symptoms	What It Could Be	What to Do
Dizziness when getting up too quickly from a seated or lying position	Temporary drop in blood pressure (orthostatic hypotension). This could be a side effect of taking medicines, such as ones for high blood pressure and depression.	Use self-care. (See “Self-Care for Orthostatic Hypotension” on next page.)

Other Causes of Dizziness:

- Alcohol
- New medications, antibiotics, or high doses of aspirin
- A change in altitude or motion sickness
- Sudden movement, such as with turning the head quickly
- Seeing fast moving objects

Treatment for dizziness depends on the cause.

- Blurred vision
- Floating, rocking, and/or rolling feeling
- Sense of walking on an uneven surface
- Loss of balance

Causes, Risk Factors & Care

Vertigo is caused by a problem with the inner ear. Causes of vertigo are:

- **Benign Positional Vertigo (BPV).** This is the most common type. It may happen when you turn over in bed, get up, sit down, bend over, or just tilt your head. The sensations start within seconds of changing positions and last less than a minute. As bothersome as BPV is, it rarely signals more serious disease. Risk factors for BPV are aging, viral infections, and a prior head injury.

Vertigo

Signs & Symptoms

- Wooziness
- Sense that the room is spinning
- Nausea



Dizziness & Vertigo, Continued

- **Ménière's disease.** This condition may be due to spasms of blood vessels in the inner ear, fluid retention in the inner ear, or allergic reactions. Ménière's disease is linked with a decrease in hearing and tinnitus. It sometimes leads to permanent hearing loss.
- **Multiple sclerosis.** With this, the covering that protects nerves (myelin) is destroyed. Over time, scar tissue (sclerosis) forms where the myelin used to be in the brain and spinal cord. Scar tissue or inflammation in the brain may cause vertigo symptoms.

After proper diagnosis, most cases of vertigo are easily treated in the doctor's office or at home with self-care.

While attacks of Ménière's disease can continue for many years, some symptoms can be controlled with medication.



Self-Care:

For Orthostatic Hypotension:

- Don't jump out of bed. Go from a lying position to a sitting position slowly. Sit on the edge of the bed a few minutes. Stand up slowly.
- From a sitting position, stand up slowly. Hold onto the arms of the chair or the head of the bed for support.

- If you feel lightheaded, sit back down for a few minutes. Take a few deep breaths. Get up again, slowly.

For Benign Positional Vertigo (BPV):

- Sit on the side of the bed and lean to your right, resting the right ear on the bed. This might make you dizzy and nauseous at first.
- Wait 20 seconds until the dizziness stops and sit up straight.
- Wait another 20 seconds and repeat steps 1 and 2 on your left side.
- Do this exercise 10 to 15 times, 3 times a day.

For Ménière's Disease:

- Lie still in bed until the dizziness and nausea are gone.
- Walk with assistance.
- Don't change positions too fast.
- Do not drive, climb ladders, or work around dangerous machinery.
- Decrease the amount of salt and fluids in your diet.
- Avoid bright lights. Do not read when you have a spinning feeling.
- Resume your normal activities when symptoms go away.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco.