

# Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo

## What is benign paroxysmal positional vertigo?

Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) is a problem with the nerves and structures of the inner ear that causes you to suddenly feel dizzy. You might feel like the room is spinning around in circles or that your surroundings are moving. This feeling is called "vertigo" and BPPV is associated with feeling dizzy when you move a certain way (such as turning your head, standing up, rolling over in bed or lying down). You might also feel nauseous at the same time. The nausea and dizziness go away in a few seconds. BPPV is bothersome, but it's rarely serious.

## What causes BPPV?

Your inner ear contains tiny calcium particles that help you keep your balance. Normally, these particles are distributed evenly in the inner ear's 3 canals. When you move your head, the calcium particles stimulate nerve cells inside the canals. These cells send your brain a signal telling it what direction your head is moving. However, the particles can break loose and clump together in one of the canals. When this happens, the nerve cells tell your brain that your head has moved more than it actually has. This incorrect signal results in vertigo. BPPV is most often associated with aging, but can also occur after you hit your head or (in more rare cases) you develop a virus in the inner ear.

## How is BPPV diagnosed?

Your doctor may suspect BPPV if you feel dizzy when you move your head or body in certain ways. Several tests can help your doctor tell if your dizziness is caused by BPPV, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan or an electronystagmography (ENG).

## How is BPPV treated?

Your doctor can show you some easy head movements that move the particles out of the canals in your inner ear and into areas where they will not cause episodes of vertigo. Doing these movements can stop the symptoms and may keep the dizziness from coming back. You may also be given medicine to treat the nausea and dizziness. In more severe cases, surgery may be necessary to fix the problem.

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