

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Wayne Terai

Dizziness & Vertigo

For children, getting dizzy is often a game: spinning in circles until they fall over in fits of giggles.

But for adults, dizziness can be frightening — and dangerous. Often a symptom of another condition, dizziness manifests itself in various ways. Sometimes the room seems to be spinning out of control. Other times, it feels like it's your body that's doing the spinning.

According to Dr. Terai, symptoms of dizziness also include a sense of imbalance or lack of coordination while walking or standing; lightheadedness; and the sensation of fainting (presyncope).

Dr. Terai gets to the bottom of patients' dizziness by determining the root cause.

Read on to learn more about dizziness, its causes and the role of chiropractic in providing relief.

Dizzying Statistics

Dizziness is the third most frequent medical complaint and the most common complaint in patients over the age of 70.

As many as 70 percent of adults — 65 years or older — experience dizziness (*Challenges in Neurology*; 1992:15-27).

In the elderly, there may be an overall degeneration of the nervous system — often exacerbated by diseases such as diabetes or atherosclerosis — making dizziness more debilitating.

Sources of Dizziness

The sensation of spinning is generally attributed to a problem in the inner ear or the central nervous system, whereas a sensation of imbalance or lack of

coordination is more likely related to the part of the brain that synchronizes movement or monitors the body's position in space (proprioception). Lightheadedness, or a sense of near-fainting, is usually due to a circulatory or psychological cause (*J Amer Med Ass* 1993;810:530-35).

Is It Dizziness Or Vertigo?

Vertigo is defined as “the illusion of motion or position, either of the patient or the environment. Vertigo may also be accompanied by nausea. Dizziness is ‘a general term, implying only the sense of a disturbed relationship to the space outside oneself.’ ” With dizziness, sensations of movement or nausea are mild, if they exist at all (*Chiropr Tech* 1993;5:5-14).

BPPV

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is the most common type of vertigo (*J Otolaryngol* 1986;15:101-4).

This type of vertigo is called “positional” because it is triggered by certain movements. It is termed “benign” because it is not a symptom of another disorder.

Specific positions of the head that precipitate attacks include backward extension and rotation. Simply rolling over in bed can spark an episode. The

duration of symptoms ranges from seconds to several minutes.

It is believed that BPPV is due to the presence of degenerative debris in the semicircular canal of the ear. This debris disrupts the flow of fluid in the inner ear, in turn disturbing balance. Trauma to the ear and increasing age boost the risk of this condition (*J Neurol* 1995;242:222-30).

Doctors of chiropractic, like Dr. Terai, help correct BPPV with specific exercises and repositioning of the head. These techniques are shown to be 55 to 70 percent effective after one session (*Arch Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg* 1993;119:450-54).



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Meniere's Syndrome

Meniere's syndrome is also associated with vertigo. Additional symptoms of this condition include ringing in the ears and hearing loss.

One researcher showed that chiropractic helped 79 percent of patients with Meniere's syndrome (*J Orthop Med* 1998;3:58-61).

Cervicogenic Vertigo

Cervicogenic vertigo, another common cause of dizziness, spawns from misalignments in the spine of the neck (*cervical* spine). These misalignments are associated with areas in the spine where bones (*vertebrae*) are slightly out of place or movement is restricted. Doctors of chiropractic call these areas of dysfunction *vertebral subluxations*.

Cervicogenic vertigo strikes in periodic episodes, triggered by changes in the position of the head relative to the trunk (*J Manipul Physiol Ther* 1991;14:193-98).

Several studies show that the cervical spine plays a major role in the body's regulation of equilibrium. Disequilibrium, the "tipping" sense of being off-balance and pulled to one side, is most often cervical in origin (*Man Med* 1983;1:18-23).

In 1991, researchers demonstrated that patients with neck pain have an alteration in input from the nervous

system regarding the neck's position in relationship to the body. They developed a test involving head and neck repositioning after an active head movement. Patients with neck pain consistently performed this test significantly worse than did pain-free controls (*Arch Phys Med Rehabil* 1991;72:288-91).

Besides causing cervicogenic vertigo, spinal misalignment may exacerbate other types of vertigo. A foremost authority on dizziness and equilibrium, Karle Lewit, MD, urges that "It is important to stress that a cervical factor may be present in all forms of vertigo and dizziness. In no other field is manipulation more effective than in the treatment of disturbances of equilibrium." (*Manipulative Therapy in the Rehabilitation of the Motor System* Butterworths, 1985.)

Lewit further believes that "The role of the spinal column in the maintenance of balance is usually underrated." (*Manipulative Therapy in Rehabilitation of the Locomotor System* Butterworth Heinemann, 1991.)

Through the use of gentle maneuvers called *chiropractic adjustments* or *spinal manipulation*, chiropractors reposition misaligned vertebrae, correcting vertebral subluxations and — alleviating cervicogenic vertigo and other forms of vertigo with cervical components.

In addition to chiropractic adjustments, chiropractors often recom-

mend specific exercises for patients with cervicogenic vertigo. This practice is supported by research. For example, one recent study determined that an exercise program based on eye-head coordination could improve the head-neck positioning sense (*Arch Phys Med Rehabil* 1994;75:895-99).

A second study looked at patients with cervicogenic vertigo under chiropractic care. "After 18 treatments, 101 of the 112 patients (90.2 percent) were symptom-free." (*J Manipul Physiol Ther* 1991;14:193-98.)

Another report found that a combination of chiropractic adjustments and physiotherapy techniques benefited 90 percent of patients with post-traumatic vertigo originating in the neck (*J Manipul Physiol Ther* 1991;14:193-98).

Other Causes

In addition, infection of the nerve in the inner ear may cause vertigo. Other causes include tumors and an opening between the middle and inner ear (fistula).

Although these causes are rare, it is important that people experiencing symptoms of vertigo be evaluated by a doctor of chiropractic or other health-care professional.

Feeling Dizzy? Schedule A Chiropractic Appointment Today!

Dizziness is not child's play. If you are currently experiencing sensations of spinning, lack of balance or light-headedness — or have in the recent past — make an appointment today with your doctor for a complete check-up.

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