



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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I'm So Dizzy **Tim Gurley P.T.A.**

"I'm so dizzy" is not only a former hit song performed by The Archies, it is also a common complaint heard by doctors every day. Another word for dizziness is vertigo. This is the sensation that the world is spinning around you as you are sitting still. Most people will experience some kind of vertigo in their lifetime. It can range from mild transient episodes to very severe chronic disorders, which can become debilitating.

Fortunately, there have been many advances in the treatment of vertigo in the last twenty years. There are several conditions that can cause vertigo. The American Institute of Balance reports that the most common cause of vertigo is a condition called benign paroxysmal positional vertigo or (BPPV).

BPPV is a condition of the inner ear that is caused by calcium carbonate crystals moving from the utricle, where they belong, into one or more of the three canals of the inner ear that are responsible for balance. This causes an excitatory response of the nervous system, which sends a false message to the brain that the head is spinning. This sensation usually lasts for approximately thirty seconds. Once the crystals have settled the sensation subsides, but when the position of the head is changed such as looking up or lying down the crystals will move again causing the excitatory response to reoccur hence the name positional vertigo. Every time the position of the head is changed with enough velocity to move the crystals the vertigo will return. There is usually a period of about ten to fifteen seconds after the position change before the vertigo will be noticed; however, in some cases it could occur immediately.

Common medical conditions that can result in BPPV are cardiovascular disease, diabetes, migraines and head trauma. Although it may occur at any age, by the age of 70, fifty percent of all individuals will experience BPPV. Fortunately there is a simple treatment for this troublesome condition. The most popular treatment is a simple, gentle repositioning of the head in a certain sequence to move the crystals through the canals of the inner ear and back into the utricle, where they will dissolve. Sound too good to be true?

According to a study conducted by the American Institute of Balance, out of 1300 patients 80 percent were symptom free after one treatment, 17 percent needed two treatments, and 3 percent required three or more treatments. It is important to recognize that the repositioning maneuvers are not a cure, but a treatment. The condition may return secondary to other medical conditions or prescription medications if they affect the body's processing of calcium. The condition may never return after the first treatment. If it does the treatment will be the same.

Tim Gurley is a Physical Therapist Assistant at Carolina SportsCare and Physical Therapy. He will gladly answer any questions regarding vertigo or any of your other physical therapy needs.

