

BENIGN PAROXYSMAL POSITIONAL VERTIGO (BPPV)

What is Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)?

BPPV (Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo) happens when crystals in the inner ear move into an inner ear canal. Head movements like rolling over or lying down on your side stimulate the inner ear canal. This can cause dizziness or feeling of spinning, nausea and vomiting. Patients with BPPV may have a hard time moving without feeling dizzy or sick.

Is BPPV life-threatening? No, BPPV is not life-threatening.

How do I know if I have BPPV or if I am having a stroke? It is hard to tell the difference between the symptoms of BPPV and stroke. Both can include dizziness, nausea and vomiting. BPPV symptoms usually occur with head movement such as rolling in the bed or lying down. They usually stop when you lie still. Stroke symptoms may occur at rest or with movement. If you are dizzy and think you might be having a stroke, call 911 immediately and go to the nearest hospital. Catching a stroke quickly gives you the best chance for safe recovery. You can learn more about other signs and symptoms of stroke in the stroke education handout.

What Do I Need to Do?

How is BPPV treated? Physical therapists treat BPPV with a treatment that moves the crystals back into place. The treatment involves gently moving the head and neck into specific positions. It only takes a few minutes. It does not hurt. Patients may have dizziness and nausea during the treatment but often feel better when it is over.

Can medicine fix BPPV? No, medicine cannot fix BPPV.

Can BPPV get better on its own? BPPV may get better on its own but the fastest way to fix it is to have the crystals moved back into place by a physical therapist.

Can BPPV come back? Yes, BPPV can come back. If it does, you can be treated again by a physical therapist.

What causes BPPV? There are many causes of BPPV. Some are aging, falls, head injury and bed rest.

What do I do after I am treated for BPPV? Move your head and neck gently after treatment so that you do not get stiff. Ask your doctor or physical therapist if you are safe to get up and walk around. It is important to drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids after treatment. Ask your doctor or physical therapist about other follow-up recommendations.

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Why Is It Important For Me to Do This?

It is important to get treated for BPPV so that your symptoms go away. Treatment can also reduce your chance of falling and injury as well as get you back to your normal activities.

Ask Questions

We want to answer all of your questions and concerns. That's why we encourage you to use a program called Ask Me 3™, created by the Partnership for Clear Health Communication. By using Ask Me 3™ you are encouraged to ask 3 simple (yet, potentially life saving questions) whenever you are talking with your physician, nurse or pharmacist:

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is it important for me to do this?

By understanding the answer to these three questions and any other questions you may have you have the knowledge necessary to manage your condition and control your symptoms. Please feel very comfortable asking any questions. Healthcare is complicated, so if you hear an answer you do not understand, please ask your health care team to explain again.