

Emergency Services

## Vertigo

**Vertigo** (say *ver-tee-go*) is commonly called 'dizziness'.

With vertigo you might feel like your head is spinning or whirling, or you might feel like the room is spinning.



Vertigo can make it hard to stand or walk and you may feel off balance. It can also make you feel sick to your stomach (nauseated).

### Some reasons for vertigo:

- turning your head quickly
- problems with one or both ears
- viral illness such as a cold or the flu
- some medicines
- a head injury or pressure in the head
- drugs or alcohol or a combination of both

### When to get help

Go see your family doctor or go to a walk-in clinic if:

- Your vertigo does not go away after following these instructions for 1 week.
- Your vertigo comes and goes and it is affecting your everyday activities.
- You notice a change in your hearing.

### Go to the nearest Emergency Department if you are dizzy and:

- You have weakness or numbness in one of your arms or legs.
- You are not able to walk.
- You are seeing double.
- You have trouble speaking or you are slurring your words.
- You have a severe headache.
- You have a very stiff neck
- You cannot stop throwing up (vomiting).

## Dizziness - *continued*

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### How is vertigo treated?

Vertigo usually gets better by itself or is easily treated. Sometimes, it is a sign of a medical condition. Treatment depends on what is causing the vertigo.

Your doctor might arrange for some tests to help find the cause.

### How to take care of yourself at home

When you feel unwell:

- Lie down for a minute or two, or until the feeling goes away.
- When you lie down, lie down with your head raised up on a pillow. Lying flat on your back can make your vertigo worse.
- Take slow, deep breaths.
- Sit up slowly and stay sitting for 1 to 2 minutes before standing.
- Stand up slowly.
- Move slowly. When you turn, try to move your whole body and not just your head.
- Take medication as directed.

For your safety, for one (1) week after your symptoms have gone away:

- **Do not** drive.
- **Do not** operate large machinery.
- **Do not** climb ladders or do other activities involving height.

To prevent falls or other injuries:

- Keep your home free of tripping hazards such as area rugs and exposed electrical cords.
- Use nonslip mats in your bath or shower.
- Hold handrails when going up or down stairs.
- Use a walking support such as a cane, walker or a wall.

### To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for deaf and hearing impaired) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)