

Vertigo and Dizziness

It's a common problem as we age. In fact, it has been reported that 80% of people over 65 have experienced dizziness, vertigo, and imbalance. Almost 1 in 4 emergency room visits includes a complaint of dizziness.

Did you know that Physiotherapy can help treat vertigo, dizziness and imbalance? This area of focus is called Vestibular Therapy. The vestibular system, located in the inner ear, helps to provide input regarding your sense of movement and balance.

Dysfunctions, trauma or viruses that affect the inner ear/vestibular system are all potential causes of vertigo and dizziness. But Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) is the most common vestibular disorder. It accounts for an estimated 50% of dizziness in older people.

People with BPPV report having episodes of dizziness brought on with certain positions. Most commonly, it is lying flat, rolling over in bed, getting up in the morning, looking up to the ceiling, and bending forward.

BPPV occurs when a calcium carbonate crystal becomes displaced within the inner ear. This displaced crystal then overstimulates the hair cells that are responsible for relaying the message of movement, resulting in a spinning (vertigo) sensation.

Treatment for BPPV is very effective. Physiotherapists, trained in Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy, can relocate the crystal, through a series of specific head and body positions, which moves the crystal away from the sensitive hair cells.

Although BPPV accounts for a large percentage of vertigo, it is not the only cause. Talk to your doctor or physiotherapist if you have these symptoms or think you may have BPPV.

Robina Palmer is a registered physiotherapist and co-owner of Sun City Physiotherapy. She has furthered her physiotherapy studies with training at the Emory University School of Medicine in Georgia for the treatment of Vestibular Disorders.

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