



Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery

WHAT IS BPPV?

BPPV or Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo is one of the most common causes of vertigo. It is due to particles that have collected in the fluid filled inner ear balance system. These particles float in the fluid and will occasionally touch a sensitive area, resulting in the sensation of vertigo or spinning. The name is derived from the fact that BPPV is benign (not life threatening), paroxysmal (dizziness occurs suddenly and is generally brief), and positional (dizziness occurs with particular head positions).

What are the symptoms of BPPV?

Symptoms can vary in each person but are generally brought on by movement or position changes of the head. Laying back, tilting the head backwards, and rolling over in bed are common “problem” motions. Although many people feel normal when not in a stimulating position, some do have a sensation of imbalance. The symptoms can last for days, months, or occasionally indefinitely. In some, the dizziness can come back after it is treated or resolves completely.

What causes BPPV?

In most people, BPPV occurs for no apparent reason (idiopathic). In a small group of people, it occurs after head injury.

How is the diagnosis made?

A doctor makes the diagnosis based on your symptoms, physical examination, and the results of hearing and/or balance tests. Occasionally, other tests may be required.

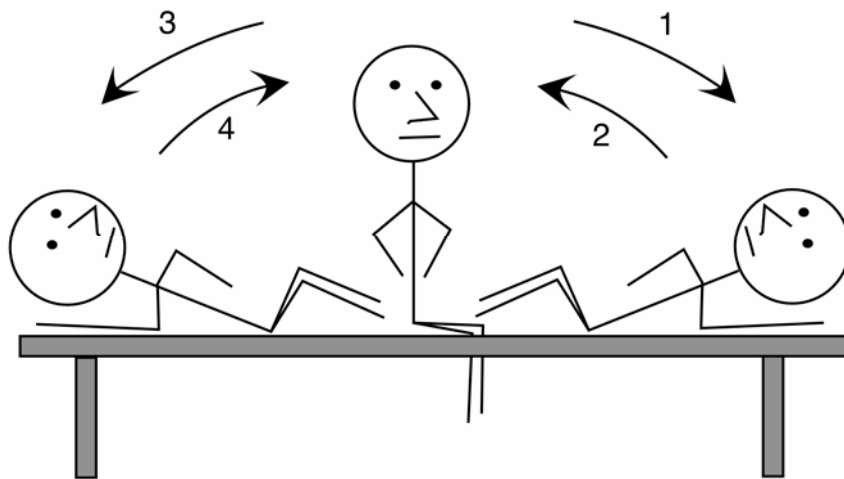
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How is BPPV treated?

There are several treatment options:

1. The particle repositioning maneuver can be performed in the office by your physician. In this maneuver, the particles are placed in an unimportant part of the inner ear. You will be asked to lie on your back with your head turned towards the “bad” side, which will make you temporarily dizzy. Then your head (along with your body) is rotated around towards the “good” ear. Finally, you will be asked to sit up slowly with your chin tucked into your chest. To increase the success of the maneuver, you will be asked to:
 - a) Sleep upright as best you can for 48 hours. Use of a recliner or pillows is beneficial.
 - b) Avoid movements that have caused the dizziness – such as bending over, moving your head quickly, or lying down on the bad ear – for one week.
 - c) A soft cervical collar can be used as a reminder for you to avoid quick motions and particular positions.
2. The Brandt-Daroff exercises are simple exercises performed at home three times a day. They gradually allow compensation or correction of the problem. The maneuver below (four positions) should be completed five times in a row during each of the three daily sessions. One remains in each position until the dizziness passes or for 10 seconds if no dizziness occurs. No restriction of activities between sessions is necessary. The sessions need not be spaced evenly throughout the day, but we ask that you do allow at least one hour between sessions.



3. Surgical procedures are available and can be used to treat BPPV in the rare occasion where conservative treatments such as those above fail.

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