

Vertigo (BPPV)

What is vertigo?

BPPV, also known as paroxysmal positional vertigo, is a spinning sensation of the head (vertigo) brought on by a certain position of the head, usually sudden changes of position.

The word “benign” means it is not a serious condition and is likely to get better with treatment.

Causes

The most common cause of vertigo is called *benign positional paroxysmal vertigo* or BPPV. BPPV happens when tiny particles in the balance centre of the inner ear are disturbed, caused usually by sudden movement. This causes the spinning sensation. It is a common problem that can affect people of all ages.

Activities that bring on a dizzy spell can vary. They often involve moving your head into a certain position suddenly, such as:

- Looking up
- Lying on one ear
- Rolling over in bed
- Getting out of bed
- Bending over

There are other causes of vertigo, including head injuries, stroke, circulation problems, infections, inner ear disorders, and the degeneration of inner ear structures.

Symptoms

- Dizziness – this begins seconds after a certain head movement and lasts less than a minute.
- Feeling light-headed
- Impaired balance
- Nausea – These symptoms usually get better once you are in a different position.

Pain, ringing in the ears (*tinnitus*) or deafness is not common.

Please Note: If you have more serious symptoms – speech difficulty, double vision, unsteady walking, difficulty swallowing, altered strength or feeling in your legs or arms, ringing in your ears or deafness – you should seek medical help.

Treatment/Advice

Treatment of BPPV can include:

- Physiotherapy exercises – Brandt-Daroff exercises as per the next page. (*See over the page*).
- Medication – motion sickness medication can sometimes help with nausea. It will not prevent vertigo attacks.
- Avoid head positions that provoke an attack.
- Avoid sleeping on the affected or ‘bad’ side.
- Elevate (raise) your head on two pillows when resting.
- In the morning get up slowly and sit on the edge of the bed for a minute.
- Take prescribed medications as directed.
- Do not drive until your symptoms have completely resolved.

What to expect

The attacks usually come in bursts. If the exercises are done regularly, the symptoms should settle over the next 10 days, although it can take longer. Most people return to work or normal activities within a week. About one in three people will have a new attack within a year. While these attacks can cause discomfort there is usually no long-term damage.

Brandt-Daroff exercises

The *Brandt-Daroff* exercises are thought to disperse any tiny particles away from the balance centre in your ear, therefore getting rid of the cause of your dizziness. You may be anxious that the exercises will bring back your symptoms. This is normal. However, the exercises will only work if you feel dizzy as you do them. The dizziness will get less with time.

1. Sit on the edge of the bed. Turn your head 45 degrees (look to the left). Lie down quickly on the right side. Ensure the back of the head rests on the bed. Wait 20–30 seconds or until the dizziness stops.
2. Sit upright. Wait 20–30 seconds for any dizziness to settle.
3. Repeat on the other side. Turn the head 45 degrees to the right before

lying down quickly on the left side.

4. Do five times on each side (takes about 10 minutes). Repeat three times a day.



Seeking help

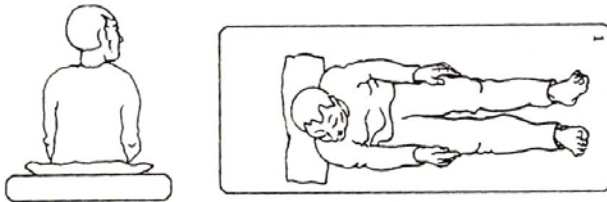
Present to emergency immediately if you develop any of the following:

- Speech or swallowing difficulties
- Facial, arm or leg weakness or numbness.

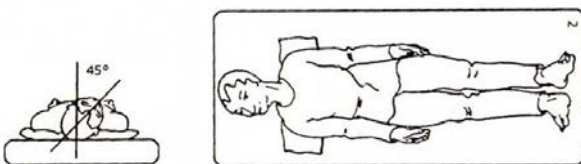
Advanced Brandt-Daroff exercises

Use the numbered pictures to guide you, as you follow the instructions. NOTE: The pictures show a patient treating himself for a **right-sided** problem.

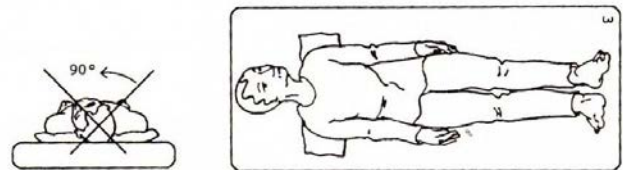
- 1) Start by sitting on a bed, place a pillow behind you so that on lying back it will be under your shoulders. Turn your head 45 degrees to the left / right.



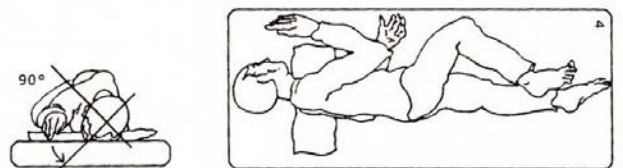
- 2) Lie back quickly with shoulders on the pillow, neck extended, and head resting on the bed. In this position the affected (left / right) ear is closest to the bed. Wait for 30 seconds.



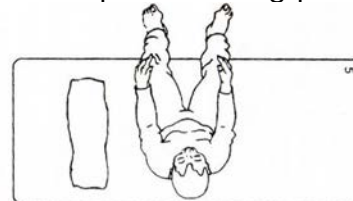
- 3) Turn your head 90 degrees to the left / right and wait again for 30 seconds.



- 4) Turn your body and head another 90 degrees to the left / right and wait for another 30 seconds.



- 5) Put your legs over the side of the bed and come up to a sitting position



Perform only once. If your symptoms do not fully resolve, then please repeat the manoeuvre. If your symptoms fail to improve or worsen, contact your physiotherapist.