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Vertigo:

Everyone has experienced vertigo at some point in their life, typically when they were young. This is the sensation you can remember from childhood when you would spin too long or too rapidly and would feel a sense of severe dizziness characterized by continued circular motion (and perhaps nausea), even after having stopped moving.

As an adult, unless you are seeking an unusual thrill, you will not actively seek experiencing the sensation of vertigo, but it may find you--unexpectedly. When the balance center in the brain (called the inner ear) is disturbed by an infection, vertigo and dizziness can result and this sensation is very disturbing and can be incapacitating.

The inner ear is an organ located in the skull, adjacent to the middle ear (where the bones that conduct hearing sit) and is deeply embedded in the bones of the skull. The inner ear, or labyrinth, is responsible for maintaining balance by sensing the body's movement in relation to the gravity of the earth.

If the inner ear becomes inflamed balance can be thrown off. The brain can be deceived into perceiving motion when none exists. In this situation, the brain is confronted by contradictory information. The eyes inform the brain that the body is not in motion, but the inflamed inner ear tells the brain another story--that the body is moving. Unable to make sense of this conflicting information, the brain "spins out of control" and all sense of balance is lost. Much like the "hum" of feedback from an amplified microphone, the information from the inner ear becomes distorted and magnified beyond recognition and is uninterpretable.

Inflammation of the inner ear occurs, almost exclusively, as a result of a virus infection. Because viral germs are not killed by antibiotics, such medications are useless in treating this condition. The symptoms of vertigo last anywhere from one to two weeks, although rarely the symptoms will persist for several weeks. The only method of improving the symptom of vertigo and dizziness is the following:

- Antivert (meclizine)

This medication is an antihistamine that is particularly useful in calming down the abnormal sensations being emitted by the inflamed inner ear. The medication

works about 50% of the time, and when taken regularly, can result in significant sleepiness. But if you are fortunate to find this medication effective, it can be quite useful.

Head Turning Exercises:

By doing formal exercises, one can get the brain used-to the abnormal vertigo sensations. This nerves from the inner ear become habituated to the movement and lose their excitability.

To do head turning exercises:

- Sit down comfortably in a chair.
- Begin by tilting your head straight back, and then to the normal, upright position.
- Repeat this movement slowly, 10 times.
- Next, tilt your hear downward and touch your chin to your chest, and bringing it back to the normal, upright position.
- Repeat this maneuver slowly, 10 times.
- Next turn your head to the right (touching your chin to your right shoulder if possible), then back to the normal, upright position.
- Repeat 10 times in the row.
- Finally, repeat this process turning the head to the left.

Do this exercise 3-4 times each day.

Other treatments:

Sometimes low doses of antidepressants can be used at night to stop the vertigo. Also, a specific head turning maneuver can be done by a trained therapist to help relieve the vertigo if it lasts over two weeks