



EAR, NOSE & THROAT CONSULTANTS OF NEVADA

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Dizziness

Dizziness is an indication of balance system that is functioning abnormally. Symptoms can include visual distortion, sensation of falling or whirling, instability, or a feeling as if you are about to black out. Balance is essential for everyday life including walking, getting out of your chair, driving a car, shopping or rolling out of bed at night. Most of the time your balance system functions automatically and you do not have to think about it. When balance problems develop and interfere with this automatic stabilization, they can disrupt your daily routine.

The balance system is made up of several components:

Input source:

- A. Inner ear, registers your head position and motion.
- B. Eyes, tells you your place in the environment.
- C. Bone, Muscles & Joints (neck, back & legs, tell you about your body position.
- D. Sense of touch, tell you about your position in relation to gravity, and objects around you.

Brain (central computer)

The central computer (brain) then puts these signals together and sends out impulses via the nerves.

Output

The nerve signals go to the eyes as well as the rest of the body in general. His reflex mechanism automatically tells the body if action is needed and orders are done.

Metabolic Factors

The metabolic status of the individual is another factor that can influence the system. Problem such as blood pressure, blood sugar, and circulation can trigger imbalance, or modify signals traveling through nerves.

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Diagnosis

Vertigo, Disequilibrium, Syncope

Dizziness can come in many ways. It may be a whirling or falling motion sensation, or pre-syncope (feeling as if you are about to black out). It can be steady, wax and wane or come in sudden attacks. It is important to remember the specifics of symptoms as that will make it easier to make a diagnosis. Keep track of your symptoms and if possible keep a log or diary. Also remember any associated symptoms such as nausea, headache, changes in hearing, etc.

Diagnosing dizziness is important as there are many treatments. Sometimes medication is appropriate. Other times dietary changes helps. An exercise program or physical therapy may be advise instead. Each individuals dizziness is different and often represents a combination of problems. Thus, evaluation requires extensive medical evaluation as well as special balance, hearing, vision testing. Not everyone requires the same testing, but it is time consuming and may take several sessions to complete.

Falls

Dizziness is a symptoms and in itself is not serious however, falling because of dizziness can break bones and cause even more serious complications. Thus it is very important to avoid falling.

Falls Prevention: Home

- a. Wear low heeled shoes that fit properly.
- b. Remove throw rugs.
- c. Use hand rails on stairs.
- d. Get out of bed or chair slowly.
- e. Use a shower stool.

Falls prevention: Outside

Going out

- a. Use a cane or walker.
- b. Give yourself extra time.
- c. Ask a friend to drive you.
- d. Use public transportation.
- e. Ask for assistance freely.

Some interesting websites:

www.medlineplus.gov

www.BalanceandMobility.com

www.vestibular.org

www.ent.net

www.americanheart.org

www.webmd.com

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