

Feeling Dizzy?

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Have you ever felt the feeling that the world is spinning around you, and you are about to fall? There are 3 main causes for dizziness to occur. Getting up too quickly from the laying down condition, called orthostatic hypotension, most people can associate with. It is when your blood pressure falls resulting in a temporary shortage of blood to the brain. Another very common cause of dizziness is Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV) which is a vestibular problem easily treated with physical therapy. Cervicogenic dizziness, which is dizziness caused by the cervical spine, or the neck, will be discussed in this article.

The neck, or cervical spine, is made up of 7 separate vertebral segments, C1 through C7. The sub occipital region is the portion of the cervical spine around the C1 and C2, closest to the skull. The sub occipital muscles refer to muscles also in the same area. They are generally small in nature, and much deeper than the skin. The cause of cervicogenic dizziness is irritation involving the sub occipital muscles. Cervical conditions, such as whiplash, arthritis (DDD, spondylosis), trauma, or postural pain, can cause irritation in the musculature, and produce neck pain and the dizziness.

Dizziness is often vestibular in nature, so a comprehensive exam must be completed to properly diagnose cervicogenic dizziness. The exam will rule out other neurological conditions or neuropathy. Most people with cervicogenic dizziness experience dizziness with active head movements. The dizziness can last minutes to hours, and often causes unsteadiness and general imbalances. Typically, general neck pain and headaches will present first, and then dizziness will follow.

Cervicogenic dizziness is a very treatable condition with most returning to full function. Conservative treatment is preferred, such as physical therapy, focusing on gentle mobilizations, active exercises, and postural training. Please see you physician if you experience any of these symptoms to see if physical therapy will help you.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice or your own specific medical problems. Have a question? Write to Questions from the Field, Gananda-Walworth Physical Therapy and Village Fitness, PO Box 162, Macedon, NY 14502, or send e-mail to gwpt@rochester.rr.com.