



## **Dizziness/Vertigo**

Vertigo is the sensation that the room or head are spinning. Vertigo is not a disease. It is a symptom. Different diseases/problems may cause vertigo. Vertigo may last for seconds, minutes, hours, days, or weeks. Vertigo may be constant or occur in episodes. Vertigo is usually but not always due to an inner ear problem. These inner ear problems include Meniere's disease, vestibular neuronitis, otolithiasis, inner ear trauma, sudden hearing loss with vertigo, labyrinthitis, and semicircular canal dehiscence syndrome. Handouts are available for the most common inner ear problems that cause vertigo.

Dizziness may be used to describe several other head sensations. These sensations may be lightheadedness, problems walking, unsteadiness, confusion, head fullness, etc. These other sensations are less likely to be due to an inner ear problem. Migraine is the most common cause of vertigo that is not due to an inner ear problem. Migraine may also cause other symptoms described as dizziness. If patients have been previously diagnosed with migraines or have headaches related to the vertigo, migraine cause is possible. As needed and preventative medications may be prescribed. As needed medications may include Imitrex. Over the counter Excedrin Migraine as needed may help. Preventative medications may include Nortriptyline or Topamax. Referral to a neurologist may be helpful. Diet and lifestyle are important when trying to manage migraine related symptoms. Red wine, cheese, peanut butter, and artificial sweeteners should be avoided. You may need to change caffeine intake. A consistent sleeping and eating schedule may be helpful. Other causes of non-vertigo dizziness are difficult to determine. Non-vertigo dizziness may be caused by medication side effects, blood pressure changes, thyroid problems, diabetes, high cholesterol, and neurologic diseases. The majority of these problems require management with an internist. Concern for neurologic diseases may require a brain MRI and evaluation by a neurologist. In most cases, the MRI is normal. Mal de Barquement syndrome is another cause of chronic dizziness. This causes chronic balance disturbance after being on a boat, plane, or amusement park ride. There are cases whereby it is not possible to determine the cause of dizziness.