

Benign Positional Paroxysmal Vertigo (BPPV)

What is BPPV?

BPPV stands for Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo.

It is one of the most common causes of vertigo. Vertigo is the false sensation that you or the room is spinning.

BPPV often comes on suddenly and can be extremely uncomfortable and make you feel sick. It can be treated very easily and successfully.

Why does BPPV start?

BPPV is a result of small calcium carbonate crystals called otoconia moving from their usual spot in your inner ear – the vestibular system.

The vestibular system is in your inner ear (see diagram) and is a big part of your balance system. Its job is to detect head and whole body movement.

The crystals that live in this system can detach randomly or as a result of a knock to the head or ageing.

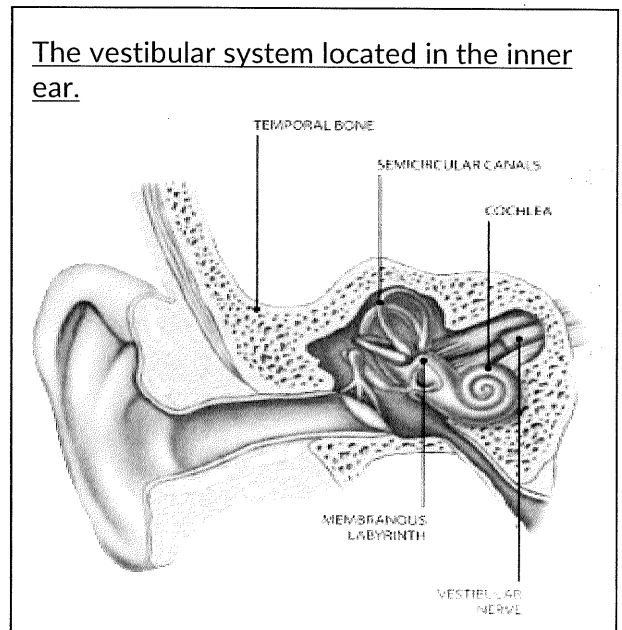
What are the symptoms?

- Intense vertigo (spinning feeling) that can last seconds or up to 2 minutes.
- The vertigo is triggered by head or body movement like rolling or getting out of bed, looking up to the ceiling or bending down to pick something up.

You may also experience:

- Feeling unsteady when walking.
- Nausea and vomiting.

Image source: <https://www.rainbowrehab.com/balance-after-brain-injury-vestibular-system-disorders-anatomy-assessment-and-treatment/>



What is the treatment?

To stop the vertigo your doctor or physiotherapist will move your head and body into different positions to move the crystals back to their normal spot.

This will take 5 – 8 minutes, but it may need to be done more than once.

This will help ease the vertigo and it should completely resolve with this treatment.

You may feel vertigo during the treatment.

Image source: <http://tasc.net.au/epley-maneuver/>

Will it come back?

It is normal to experience a “hangover effect” after treatment. You might still feel dizzy, off balance or just not yourself – but the true vertigo (spinning sensation) should have stopped.

This can last for a few days up to a few weeks.

About 33% of people get BPPV again.

What do I do if it comes back?

- Go to the Emergency Department if your symptoms are severe and you don't feel safe walking around at home.
- If your symptoms are mild go to your GP
- Make an appointment with the outpatient Vestibular Physiotherapist at Royal Darwin Hospital if you have been referred. If you have not been referred you can get a referral from your GP.

The Epley Manoeuvre: most common treatment for BPPV, performed by your doctor or physiotherapist

