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Brampton: 220 Wexford Road Unit 2 Brampton, ON L6Z-4N7
Ph: (905) 840-WELL Fax: (905) 840 -LIFE
www.drjustineblainey.com
www.blaineywellness.com

What Causes Vertigo and How Can You Prevent It?

By **Dr. Mercola** | December 15th, 2016

Vertigo is caused by an underlying condition that usually comes with other warning signs, such as uncontrollable eye movement, loss of muscle coordination, nausea and vomiting. Learn how each condition can induce vertigo below.

A Problem in Your Central Nervous System Can Cause Vertigo

Central vertigo tends to have longer attack durations compared to peripheral vertigo because of its more serious nature. The following are vertigo-related nervous system disorders:

- **Acoustic Neuroma**

Acoustic neuroma is a condition defined by a benign tumor that grows on the main nerve of your inner ear that leads to your brain. Because this nerve plays a role in balance and hearing, the pressure from the tumor felt by the adjacent nerves can induce vertigo, hearing problems and balance issues.

The cause of acoustic neuroma is thought to be a malfunctioning gene on your chromosome 22 that controls the production of Schwann cells covering your inner ear's nerves.

- **Migraine-Induced Vertigo**

A migraine is a headache that is more painful compared to a typical headache. Apart from vertigo, it may be accompanied by seeing flashes of light, blind spots, nausea and a tingling feeling in your arms and legs.

The exact causes of a migraine are largely unknown, making it hard for doctors to diagnose for vertigo, because it may also come with anxiety, depression and low blood pressure.

- **Multiple Sclerosis**

Multiple sclerosis is an autoimmune condition wherein your myelin, the defensive layer that covers your nerve cells, becomes inflamed, causing coordination problems between your brain and muscles.

The symptoms of multiple sclerosis depend on the severity of the attack. Aside from vertigo, you may experience fatigue, vision problems, numbness and bladder dysfunction in varying degrees of intensity. There is no known cure for multiple sclerosis, but symptoms can be managed through a variety of treatments to help your nerve cells recover.

Inflammation in Your Inner Ear May Result in Peripheral Vertigo

Your inner ear contains important nerve endings that process auditory signals and help control your balance during movement. The following conditions are known to cause vertigo:

- **Vestibular Neuritis**

Vestibular neuritis is the inflammation of your vestibular system, a group of organs that help maintain your balance. The inflammation can confuse your brain, thus causing vertigo. However, it doesn't usually affect your hearing. Viruses such as measles, influenza, rubella and herpes may cause the inflammation. Bacteria may also be a cause, but the symptoms are milder compared to a viral infection.

- **Meniere's Disease**

Meniere's disease is a disorder that can cause recurring episodes of vertigo and, over time, may also cause permanent hearing loss, tinnitus and a feeling of pressure in the affected ear.

The cause of Meniere's disease isn't entirely understood, but it appears that it results from an abnormal amount of fluid in the inner ear. Factors such as improper fluid drainage, allergies, viral infection or abnormal immune response may play a role, but there is still insufficient evidence to definitively confirm this.

- **Labyrinthitis**

Labyrinthitis is characterized by an inflammation deep inside your ear's "labyrinth," a network of fluid-filled channels in your inner ear that help your body's ability to balance. Due to the inflammation, the information sent by your infected ear to your brain is not synchronized with what is being sent by your eyes, thus causing vertigo. Similar to BPPV, labyrinthitis may occur because of a virus, such as the common cold or flu.

- **Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)**

BPPV causes vertigo when calcium carbonate crystals detach from the linings of your inner ear. As you move your head in certain positions, the crystals are swept along the fluids of the inner ear canals, sending confusing messages to your brain. You may get BPPV due to an ear infection, ear surgery, a head injury or prolonged bed rest. Sometimes though, it may happen for no reason at all.

Neck Problems May Induce Cervical Vertigo

Your neck contains nerve endings that work together with your inner ear to help maintain your balance and keep your brain aware of its bearings. However, a malfunction in the neck can confuse your other balance organs, thus causing vertigo.

One such problem is vascular compression, wherein your vertebral arteries are compressed due to an accident. The second is a malfunction in your neck proprioceptors, which are nerves that help sense movement and vibration. Any of these two may cause cervical vertigo.

