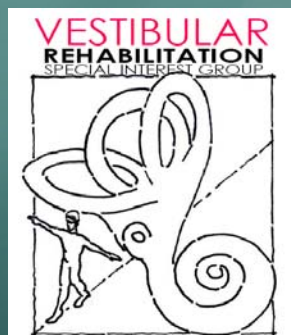


FACT SHEET



Cervicogenic Dizziness

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Some people experience dizziness that seems to be related to problems in the neck. This is referred to as *cervicogenic dizziness* (CD) and means that symptoms of dizziness arise from the cervical spine. Patients may feel dizzy, lightheaded, and nauseous when moving or at rest. Symptoms may last for minutes or hours. Some patients feel off-balance, though it is not uncommon for patients with CD to have trouble describing their symptoms. CD is often accompanied by neck pain, limited motion, stiffness, and sometimes a history of a whiplash injury to the neck. Many patients with CD limit their usual tasks and duties because they are afraid to move.

Because there is no definite test to diagnose CD, a physical therapist will work closely with your medical doctor to make sure there are no other problems (like inner ear or brain disorders) that could be causing your dizziness. Physical therapists that are specially trained to treat CD will address the unique signs and symptoms of each patient's dizziness. There is evidence to suggest that treatment of the neck problem can decrease the symptoms of dizziness (which may include vertigo, lightheadedness, nausea), and can also improve imbalance.¹ Physical therapy usually addresses the musculoskeletal problems of the neck, as well as any other problems that may be contributing to the dizziness and imbalance.

At this time, researchers only speculate about the exact causes of cervicogenic dizziness. It may be that areas of the neck are not sending the appropriate signals to the brain about body movement and position sense. More research is needed. Adhering to a program of recovery as determined by the physical therapist will help you to feel better and hopefully will help you to learn to manage any symptoms that remain.

References:

Herdman, S. (2007). *Vestibular Rehabilitation*, (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis Company.



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