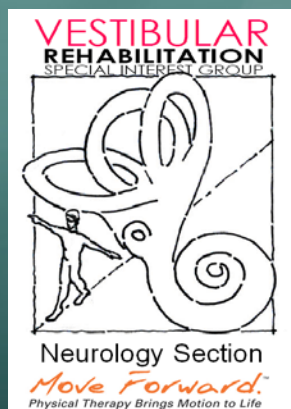


FACT SHEET



Anxiety Dizziness

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Why does anxiety cause me to be dizzy?

Dizziness commonly occurs along with anxiety. If one is experiencing anxiety, dizziness can result. On the other hand dizziness can be anxiety-producing. The *vestibular* system is responsible for sensing body position and movement in our surroundings. The vestibular system is made up of an inner ear on each side, specific areas of the brain, and the nerves that connect them. This system is responsible for the sense of dizziness when things go wrong. Scientists believe that this area interacts with the brain areas responsible for anxiety, and cause both symptoms.

The dizziness that accompanies anxiety is often described as a sense of light-headedness or wooziness. There may be a feeling of motion or spinning inside rather than in the environment. Sometimes there is a sense of swaying even though you are standing still. Environments like grocery stores, crowded malls or wide open spaces may cause a sense of imbalance and disequilibrium. These symptoms are caused by legitimate physiologic changes within the brain.

If there is an abnormality in the vestibular system, the symptom of dizziness can be the result. If one already has a tendency toward anxiety, dizziness from the vestibular system and anxiety can interact, making symptoms worse. Often the anxiety and the dizziness must be treated together in order for improvement to be made.

How does physical therapy help?

Scientists are starting to better understand better how dizziness and anxiety are related, and some ideas about treatment are being developed. Some experienced physical therapists are treating patients that have anxiety and dizziness with good success.

The therapy focuses on making the vestibular system work as well as it can, and on reducing symptoms of dizziness in anxiety-producing environments. Patients develop skills in managing dizziness and learning to control symptoms through *pacing*. Pacing is doing symptom-provoking activities in small doses with a rest in between, so that your symptoms do not get out of control. By understanding how the vestibular system works and what situations or movements cause your symptoms, you will learn to better manage your situation.



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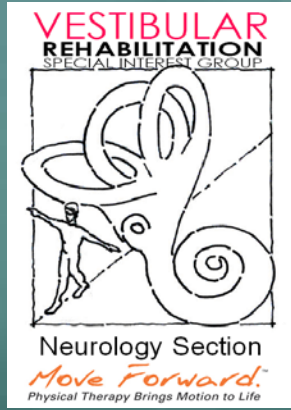
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Anxiety Dizziness



Is there anything else that can be done?

In addition to treating the dizziness component, the anxiety component of the problem may need medical treatment. Most treatment for anxiety involves psychological counseling, cognitive-behavioral therapy and medication. The physician may recommend a limited use of medications in order to control the anxiety and make physical therapy more tolerable.

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