



## Why is the room spinning? By Rhonda Yeska, DPT, CMTPT

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Are you experiencing dizziness or do you feel like the room is spinning when you turn your head in a specific direction?

Balance disorders, dizziness such as vertigo or unsteadiness are often associated with falls or near falls in adults over the age of 65. In fact, dizziness affects 30% of individuals over the age of 65. Dizziness or vertigo can show in many different ways. This can include, but is not limited to, symptoms after quick head or body movements, prolonged head positions and/or body positions.

Our body maintains its balance by three systems: inner ear (including the vestibular system), our eyes and sensory system through our feet. The more common system affected is the vestibular system. And more commonly, people will describe this symptom as vertigo or the sensation that the room is spinning with positional changes. When your vestibular system is compromised, the crystals located in your inner ear can become displaced and travel into one of the three canals of your inner ear. Depending on which canal the crystals settle into, you will experience dizzy spells based on specific movements that will cause the crystals to move within the ear canal. More often than not, this positional vertigo is something that can easily be treated within a few visits from a physical therapist specifically trained in treating this type of diagnosis. The physical therapist will put the person through a series of special tests to determine the specific structures involved, treat the involved canal with a positional maneuver and will develop a home program catered to the patient's diagnosis. Resolution of symptoms usually occurs within a few visits.

If you are not experiencing dizziness but are having difficulty maintaining your balance, it is important to seek treatment from a physical therapist in order to help you gain balance and build your strength to prevent falls and maintain your safety in the home. A majority of individuals over the age of 70 years of age report problems of dizziness, imbalance, and balance-related falls, which account for more than one-half of the accidental deaths in the elderly. This is not something you have to live with. You can be treated so that you can live a quality life.

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