

Tips for Symptom Management in Acute Dizziness/Vertigo

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Until a person with dizziness/vertigo can get further examination and treatment, here are a few tips on how to manage symptoms and, if appropriate, how to move more safely.

1. The Body Scan

When you are having dizziness or vertigo, try to pay attention to the information from your body. Note the position of your ankles, knees, hips and shoulders - if you are upright, are they lined up, or are you leaning to one side? If standing or walking, keep your feet apart for stability.

This sort of “body scan” helps us to increase our attention to the information from our body’s natural position sensors, also known as “proprioception.” We want to encourage the brain to utilize helpful information for balance, rather than be distracted by what may be less accurate information from the inner ear (if you are having a vestibular problem).

2. Lock Your Gaze

Another strategy to try is to use your eyes to look at objects in your surroundings, particularly as you move. For example, if you are standing facing the window in the room pictured below and wanted to turn right around to face the flowers, **AS YOU TURN** you could look at the window frame, red chair, bowl of apples, globe, table in the dining room, and then the flowers.



This strategy can be applied to any movement - bending down, looking up, sitting up from lying down, etc. Sometimes using this strategy can lessen dizziness/vertigo during movement. Moving more slowly also may make dizziness or vertigo more tolerable.

3. Stress Management

Dizziness and vertigo are known to increase anxiety in most people. This anxiety is a normal physiologic response to the brain saying, “Hey, the information for where I am aligned in space doesn’t seem accurate - I don’t feel right!” when we are dizzy.

Try these strategies to calm the brain, which may reduce the sensation of dizziness and vertigo:

- Relax your jaw, neck, and shoulders, even gently rolling the shoulders if you can.
- Take a few slow, deep breaths. Try a body scan (see #1).
- Tell your brain: “You are safe. We are getting (or going to get) proper care for this.”