

my physical therapist

PHYSICAL
THERAPY

AT St Luke's

BENIGN PAROXYSMAL POSITIONAL VERTIGO

WHAT IS BENIGN PAROXYSMAL POSITIONAL VERTIGO?

Benign positional vertigo (BPPV) is characterized by spells of vertigo, lasting less than 1 minute that occurs when the patient moves the head into particular positions. Typically this occurs with looking up, lying down or rolling over in bed. This particular type of vertigo is caused by a problem with the balance system of the inner ear (the labyrinth). It is thought that debris (called canaliths or “ear rocks”) break off due to a jarring of in the inner ear and subsequently collects in the inner ear.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

The physical therapist performs a history, physical assessment and balance tests. Special tests, such as the Hallpike-Dix test are performed to determine the side of involvement (confirmed by the observation of torsional nystagmus). If indicated, further diagnostic testing can be ordered, such as ENG or MRI.

HOW IS IT TREATED IN PHYSICAL THERAPY?

Certain exercises may be helpful with some people. Various kinds of physical maneuvers have proven helpful, such as Canalith repositioning maneuvers (also known as Epley Maneuver). Lastly, it is important to perform a complete assessment of the cervical and cranial base regions to identify any joint or soft tissue dysfunctions that may be contributing the to patient's symptoms.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS WITH THIS TREATMENT?

A few patients may experience nausea while the canaliths are being repositioned. It is possible that short-term dizziness may occur right after the treatment, but there is usually immediate relief from the “spinning” sensation.