Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo – BPPV

Dizziness is one of the most common reasons adults go to see their doctor, second only to back pain. There can be many sources of dizziness (or causes). The most common by far is known as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo. This condition affects 1 out of every 10 older adults.

What is benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV)?
Vertigo is a type of dizziness in which a person feels a true sense of spinning or motion. It feels as if either you are spinning or the environment around you is spinning. Positional vertigo means that the vertigo, or spinning, is triggered by changes in your position.

What are the symptoms of BPPV?
The most common signs are:
• Spinning dizziness when rolling over quickly in bed or getting out of bed
• Spinning when looking up or bending over
• Spinning when extending your head back, such as in a dentist chair or beauty salon

The true spinning feeling usually lasts less than 30 seconds, although a feeling of nausea may persist up to a few hours. Some people describe a general sense of imbalance whenever walking around, along with the above symptoms.

Positional vertigo usually has a very sudden onset. Most people say they woke in the morning with sudden and severe symptoms. Most often it comes from out of the blue with no associated illness or trauma. It tends occur for the first time when a person is in their 40s, 50s or 60s.

What causes BPPV?
BPPV is caused by the displacement of microscopic crystals in the inner-ear balance organ. The crystals become dislodged and begin to float in the rotation center of the inner ear, thereby bringing on a false sense of spinning after sudden head movements.

How is BPPV treated?
For the millions suffering with positional vertigo, there is a simple and effective treatment called canalith repositioning. It involves manipulation of the patient’s head position to work those tiny crystals back into the part of the inner ear in which they belong. The test is painless and is proven to be more than 85 percent effective in relieving symptoms. There is no medication that treats BPPV effectively.

If you have any symptoms of BPPV, please discuss this with your doctor. Your doctor may refer you to an audiologist for further testing of your hearing and balance system.

Please do not suffer needlessly from dizziness – a simple treatment could change the way you live your life.