

Calvary Community Care Dizziness and Loss of Balance

Falls and Injury Prevention – How not to fall for it



Do you ever feel dizzy?
Lose your balance?
Discuss any loss of balance with your doctor, as being safe and steady is important to both prevent falls and maintain your independence.


There are many reasons why you may feel dizzy e.g. high or low blood pressure, medication alteration, middle ear infection, dehydration. Your doctor may be able to work out the cause with information from you.

Preventing dizziness and/or loss of balance

Inactive or unfit people tend to have poorer balance and weaker muscles and can be unsteady when walking. These can all increase the risk of falling. It is common for people who feel unsteady to do less walking. Over time this actually makes you more likely to fall because your muscles get weaker, your joints stiffer and your balance gets worse. Talk to your doctor about dizziness/loss of balance, but in the meantime:

- Change position slowly and wait until you are balanced before walking
- Avoid turning your head quickly or suddenly
- If you do feel dizzy, stop what you are doing and sit down until it passes
- Make sure you drink enough fluid. Drink at least 6 large cups (1 cup = 250ml or 8 fl ounces) of fluid a day unless your doctor has advised you to restrict your fluid intake
- Be careful when you bend your head back or look up
- Avoid climbing on chairs or ladders if dizziness and loss of balance is an issue

Some types of dizziness are a sign that there may be a more serious underlying medical condition of which you may not have been aware. Take notice of when you are dizzy, what brings it on, what settles it and how long it lasts. In many cases dizziness can be treated.

An illustration of a man's face and upper torso. He has a surprised or dizzy expression with wide eyes and an open mouth. Above his head, there are several yellow stars and blue curved arrows, symbolizing dizziness or vertigo. The background is light blue.

Types of Dizziness

Dizziness is a word used to describe feeling faint or lightheaded, weak, woozy or unsteady.

Vertigo is a type of dizziness that makes you feel like the world is spinning or moving.

Both can lead to a loss of balance and, potentially, a fall.

Seek urgent medical help if dizziness is associated with:

- pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness in the chest, shoulders, neck, arms, jaw, or back
- feeling sick, cold sweat, shortness of breath
- feeling numb or weak in the face, arm or leg
- trouble talking, understanding or swallowing
- blurred or poor vision in one or both eyes
- loss of balance or unexplained falls
- confusion or becoming unconscious.

National Stroke Foundation 2009 & National Heart Foundation of Australia 2010

Need support? Calvary Community Care can support safe, independent living at home with a variety of services and expert advice. Call 1300 66 00 22 for more information.

Who can help?

Your doctor can speak with you about dizziness and/or loss of balance, as well as can refer you to other health professionals or services for which you may be eligible.

Emergencies call 000.

Neurological physiotherapists specialise in treating dizziness.

Physiotherapists can assist with balance and strength exercises.

Pharmacists can speak with you about your medications (Medication Review) and whether they are contributing to your dizziness/loss of balance (free of charge).

Community Health Centres and Day Therapy Centres can offer physiotherapy (and some other allied health services).

Specialist clinic which sees people who have fallen. The aim is to discover why your fall happened and to treat any underlying problems that may increase your chances of falling. The health of your bones will also be assessed, as you may be at particular risk of having a fracture.

My Aged Care gives you access to a range of information and support which can be delivered to you in your home. It is for people 65yrs+, or 50yrs+ for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person.

www.myagedcare.gov.au or ph. 1800 200 422.

References

SA Falls and Falls Injury Prevention Fact Sheet 4
'Dizziness and Balance'

<http://bit.ly/2mSWWpQ>

Revised and re-published by the Commonwealth of Australia 2011
'Don't Fall For It - A guide to preventing falls for older people'

<http://bit.ly/2o4iwLr>

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