

# PATIENT PRESENTS WITH DIZZINESS

Ask patient to describe their dizziness

True Vertigo  
*Spinning and Illusion of Movement*

Non-Vertigo

## CNS

(Rare, but important)

### Key Additional Features

- Double vision
- Focal weakness/numbness
- Loss of consciousness
- Dysphagia/Dysarthria
- Incontinence

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3

## OTOLOGICAL

### Key Features of Vertigo

- Episodic
- Worsened with head movement
- Nausea/vomiting

### Key Questions

- Auditory symptoms
  - Tinnitus, hearing loss, fullness
- Duration of vertigo
  - Seconds / minutes / hours
- Triggers
  - Positional, exertional, trauma
  - URTI, valsalva

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### Ménière's Disease

- Vertigo - Minutes to Hours
- Hearing Loss
- Tinnitus
- Aural pressure

### BPPV

#### (Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo)

- Vertigo - Seconds to minutes
- Position triggered
- Usually no auditory symptoms
- Positive Hallpike

### Vestibular Neuronitis

#### (Viral Labyrinthitis)

- Vertigo - Days to weeks
- No auditory symptoms
- ++ nausea

### Presyncope/Light-headedness

- Arrhythmia
- Postural hypotension
- Aortic stenosis

### Medication-induced (Light-headedness and/or Imbalance)

- Antihypertensives
- Anticonvulsants
- Sedatives / Hypnotics
- Hypoglycemia

### Dysequilibrium

- Impaired vision
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Muscle weakness
- Gait Imbalance

### Psychiatric (Nonspecific)

- Anxiety / Panic disorders
- Mood disorders



Consider referral to specialist

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If asymmetric sensorineural hearing loss consider acoustic neuroma

2

Continuous nonpositional vertigo >2 weeks

3

Abnormal eye movements

- Nystagmus
- Gaze palsy

## Questions to Ask

| Main Types of Dizziness:<br>(Sloan, 1992)      | Vertigo                                                                                                                | Presyncopal<br>Lightheadedness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Dysequilibrium/<br>Imbalance<br>* Most common cause of<br>chronic dizziness                                                                                                | Depression                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                | Acute caused by: TIA=s*,<br>Labyrinthitis, Meniere=s and<br>Migraines)<br>Chronic caused by: drugs, BPV                | Caused by: Reduced<br>oxygen to the brain                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Caused by: Multifactorial<br>(vision, hearing, position<br>sense, arthritis, drugs, OH*,<br>feet, footwear, weakness)                                                      | Caused by: Anxiety or<br>depression due to<br>biochemical changes in the<br>brain triggered by stress or<br>emotional states |
| What are you feeling?                          | Client feels that they or the room<br>is moving (typically spinning)                                                   | Client feels they are about<br>to pass out                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Client feels unsteady on feet                                                                                                                                              | Client describes a floating or<br>tingling feeling                                                                           |
| What are your associated<br>symptoms?          | √Hearing Loss - Drugs, Meniere<br>& Labyrinthitis<br>√No hearing loss - TIAs & BPV<br>√Ringing in the ears - Meniere=s | Perspiration<br>Palpitations<br>Nausea<br>Weakness                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Numbness<br>Weakness<br>Incoordination of limbs                                                                                                                            | Somatic complaints<br>√headaches<br>√insomnia, fatigue<br>√neck pain                                                         |
| In what position does the<br>dizziness happen? | Can happen in any position<br>BPV √occurs with position<br>change                                                      | While getting up or post<br>prandial                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | While walking                                                                                                                                                              | Any position                                                                                                                 |
| How long does it last?                         | BPV - seconds to minutes<br>TIA=s - minutes to hours<br>Meniere=s - hours to days<br>Labyrinthitis - days to weeks     | Lasts only when client is<br>getting up from lying or<br>sitting.                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Most prominent when<br>standing or walking and<br>relieved by sitting or lying<br>down.                                                                                    | Continuous and exacerbated<br>by hyperventilation and/or<br>emotional stress                                                 |
| Check for the Causes                           | √TIAs - other neurologic signs                                                                                         | √Check for orthostatic<br>hypotension. If there is no<br>postural drop then ask if the<br>dizziness happens:<br>1. In early am<br>2. During the night<br>3. After medications<br>4. After meals<br>!Check for cardiac<br>problems (arrhythmia or<br>valvular disease) | √Any problems with<br>hearing, vision, weakness, or<br>feet?<br>√Drugs - see 1 <sup>st</sup> page<br>√Check for orthostatic<br>hypotension<br>√Does client have arthritis? | √Is client depressed?<br>√Does client have anxiety?<br>√Is client stressed?                                                  |

\*BPV = Benign Positional Vertigo, OH = Orthostatic Hypotension, TIA=s = Transient Ischemic Attack