

WELLNESS WORKS



Ever felt lightheaded or dizzy? Believe it or not, it's often your ears that are to blame, especially if you've got vertigo. This month, let's discuss the differences between dizziness, lightheadedness, and vertigo. Sometimes these conditions are unavoidable, but there are some preventive steps you can take through ear care.

February 2019

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Lightheadedness vs. Vertigo

Dizziness

Dizziness is a more general term that is often used to describe two different feelings. It is important to know exactly what you mean when you say, "I feel dizzy," because it can help you and your doctor narrow down the list of possible problems.

- Lightheadedness is a feeling that you are about to faint or "pass out." Although you may feel dizzy, you do not feel as though you or your surroundings are moving. Lightheadedness often goes away or improves when you lie down. If lightheadedness gets worse, it can lead to a feeling of almost fainting or a fainting spell. You may sometimes feel nauseated or vomit when you are lightheaded.
- Vertigo is a feeling that you or your surroundings are moving when there is no actual movement. You may feel as though you are off balance, spinning, whirling, falling, or tilting. When you have severe vertigo, you may feel very nauseated or vomit. You may have trouble walking or standing, and you may lose your balance and fall.

Lightheadedness

It is common to feel lightheaded from time to time. Brief episodes of lightheadedness are not usually the result of a serious problem. Lightheadedness often is caused by a momentary drop in blood pressure and blood flow to your head that occurs when you get up too quickly from a seated or lying position. Ongoing lightheadedness may mean you have a more serious problem that needs to be evaluated.

Lightheadedness has many causes, including:

- Allergies.
- Illnesses such as the flu or colds. Home treatment of your flu and cold symptoms usually will relieve lightheadedness.
- Vomiting, diarrhea, fevers, and other illnesses that cause dehydration.



- Very deep or rapid breathing (hyperventilation).
- Anxiety and stress.
- The use of tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs.
- Some prescription medications may cause lightheadedness as a side effect.

Vertigo

Vertigo occurs when there is conflict between the signals sent to the brain by various balance- and position-sensing systems of the body. Your brain uses input from four sensory systems to maintain your sense of balance and orientation to your surroundings: vision, sensory nerves in your joints, skin pressure, and the inner ear.

Common causes of vertigo include:

- Inner ear disorders, such as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), Ménière's disease, vestibular neuritis, or labyrinthitis.
- Injury to the ear or head.
- Migraine headaches, which are painful, debilitating headaches that often occur with vertigo, nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light, noise, and smell.
- Decreased blood flow through the arteries that supply blood to the base of the brain (vertebrobasilar insufficiency).
- Some prescription medications may cause vertigo as a side effect.

Immediate medical attention is needed if vertigo occurs suddenly with a change in speech or vision. In that case, it can mean a problem in the brain, such as a stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA).

Source: [U of M Health](#)

American Heart Month

February is American Heart Month. This is a great time to assess your risk of heart disease using the quiz found on the American Heart Association's website, www.heart.org, and try to prioritize heart health with tips like these:

Eat a healthy diet: Be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods. Healthy eating can also help lower your risk factors for heart disease. Eating foods low in saturated fats, trans fat, and cholesterol and high in fiber can help prevent high cholesterol. Limiting salt in your diet also can lower your blood pressure. Limiting sugar in your diet can help prevent or control diabetes.

Get enough exercise: Physical activity can help you maintain a healthy weight and lower your blood pressure, cholesterol, and sugar levels. For adults, the Surgeon General recommends 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise, like brisk walking or bicycling, every week. Children and adolescents should get 1 hour of physical activity every day.

Don't smoke: Cigarette smoking greatly increases your risk for heart disease. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you do smoke, quitting will lower your risk for heart disease. Your doctor can suggest ways to help you quit.

Moderate your alcohol: Avoid drinking too much alcohol, which can raise your blood pressure. Men should have no more than 2 drinks per day, and women only 1.

Adapted from <https://www.heart.org/>



Ear Care

Your ears need special care. Cleaning is important, but so is safety from noise and injury.

Cleaning your ears

- Clean your ears with extra care. Wipe the outer ear with a washcloth or tissue. Do not put anything into your ear smaller than your elbow. Do not use Q-tips, bobby pins or sharp pointed objects to clean your ears. These objects may injure the ear canal or eardrum.
- Earwax is the ear's mechanism for self-cleaning. If you have a build-up of wax that is blocking your hearing, see your doctor to have it removed.
- If you experience itching or pain in your ears, consult with your primary care physician to determine the appropriate treatment and to determine if you need to see a specialist.

Illness and medications

- Reduce the risk of ear infections by treating upper respiratory (ears, nose, throat) infections promptly.
- Drainage from the ear is not normal and usually suggests infection. See your doctor as soon as possible.
- Some medications can affect hearing. Take medications only as directed, and consult your doctor if you experience unusual hearing, balance problems, or ringing in the ears.

Noise

- At home or work, wear hearing protection during exposure to loud levels of noise. This includes mowing the lawn, leaf blowing or using power tools. By law, a noisy work environment requires use of hearing protection.
- Ear buds do not protect your hearing. Also, listening to music while using power tools is dangerous to your hearing and should be avoided.
- When using personal sound systems, the volume should be at a comfortable level. If someone else can hear what you are listening to, the volume is too high. Remove the headphones from time to time to give your ears a rest.
- Wear earplugs at rock concerts, nightclubs and motor sporting events.

Safety issues

- Always wear a helmet when you bike, ski, and roller blade or in any other activity that

puts you at risk for head and ear injuries.

- When flying in an airplane, swallow and yawn frequently when the plane is ascending and descending to equalize pressure in your ears. If you have an upper respiratory problem such as a cold or sinus infection, take a decongestant a few hours before descending, or use a decongestant spray just prior to descent and on landing.
- Earplugs with special filters can be purchased to help equalize air pressure in ears during air travel.

General care

- Have your ears checked regularly by your primary care physician. Have your hearing checked by an audiologist if you or anyone else questions whether your hearing is normal. Consult an ear physician as necessary.
- When outdoors in sunny weather, remember to use sunscreen on your ears.
- If you notice unusual bumps or scaly areas on the exterior ear, consult your physician.
- See an ear doctor immediately if you injure your ears, experience ear pain, or notice changes in your ears or hearing.
- Know the warning signs of hearing loss:
 - Difficulty hearing conversations, especially in the presence of background noise
 - Misunderstanding what other people say and answering inappropriately
 - Requiring the television or radio volume to be louder than others in the room prefer
 - Withdrawing from conversations and social situations because it is too difficult to hear
 - Reading lips so you can try to follow what people are saying
 - Noise or ringing within your ears or head, called tinnitus, which is not caused by an external sound source

Adapted from [Cleveland Clinic](#)



Recipe of the Month: Pork & Green Chile Stew

Let your slow cooker work—while you're at work!—and come home to a delicious bowl of hearty stew for dinner. It takes just 25 minutes to prepare in the morning.

Ingredients:

2 pounds boneless pork sirloin roast or shoulder roast
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 ½ cup chopped onion (1 medium)
 4 cups peeled and cubed potatoes (4 medium)
 3 cups water
 1 (15 ounce) can hominy or whole-kernel corn, drained
 2 (4 ounce) cans diced green chile peppers, undrained
 2 tablespoons quick-cooking tapioca
 1 teaspoon garlic salt
 ½ teaspoon ground cumin
 ½ teaspoon ancho chile powder
 ½ teaspoon ground pepper
 ¼ teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
 Chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

Directions:

Trim fat from meat. Cut the meat into ½-inch pieces. Cook half of the meat in a large skillet in hot oil over medium-high heat until browned. Using a slotted spoon, remove the meat from the skillet. Repeat with the remaining meat and the onion. Drain off fat. Transfer all of the meat and the onion to a 3½- to 4½-quart slow cooker.

Stir in potatoes, the water, hominy, green chile peppers, tapioca, garlic salt, cumin, ancho chile powder, ground pepper, and oregano. Cover and cook on Low for 7 to 8 hours or on High for 4 to 5 hours. If desired, garnish with cilantro.

Nutrition Information, per 1-2/3 cup serving:
 Calories 180; Fat 4 g (Saturated 1 g); Cholesterol 37 mg; Sodium 251 mg; Carbohydrate 23 g; Fiber 3 g; Protein 15 g; Sugars 2 g

Source: [Eating Well](#)