Dizziness

Dizziness, one of the most common complaints that face a doctor, is not a specific disease. It is a symptom resulting from a problem affecting one of the organs responsible for maintaining your sense of balance; these are your eye muscles, a portion of your brain, the muscles of your body and your inner ear. When all is well with your feeling of balance, these organs are working in perfect harmony.

Symptoms
Although dizziness is quite common, what is reported as dizziness varies from person to person. People will use the word "dizzy" to describe a wide range of feelings. These may include a vague sensation in the head of floating or swimming all the way to the most severe form of dizziness in which a person experiences extreme whirling sensations. This extreme form of dizziness is called vertigo. Between these extremes are feelings of light-headedness such as you might experience just before fainting, giddiness, or a general sense of unsteadiness or confusion. All of these unusual sensations may cause you much concern or anxiety.

Causes of Vertigo
Vertigo is the most troublesome form of dizziness. It can be caused by an irritation of your inner ear or of the nerves that are connected to the inner ear. The irritation can result from an infection or from substances such as alcohol or nicotine. You may feel as if the room is moving or spinning around. Vertigo can be brought about by quick movements of the head and can result in nausea or vomiting. Moreover, persons suffering from vertigo may experience ringing in the ear and poor hearing. Heart disease, anemia, hardening of the arteries in the brain and high blood pressure, all interfere with the blood supply to the inner ear. This often leads to vertigo. The presence of cold water in the outer ear may excite the neighboring inner ear resulting in dizziness. Also a head cold may extend into the ear producing the sensation of disturbed balance.

Low blood sugar, sometimes referred to as hypoglycemia, may also cause occasional dizziness. Inability to focus the eyes properly or failure of the eyes to work together properly may upset your sense of balance and cause dizziness. Sometimes injuries to the head literally shake up the delicate workings of the inner ear and cause a loss of balance. This may last for some time, but will go away eventually.

If a person has allergies, the allergies can produce changes in the inner ear and cause dizziness. A sense of light-headedness together with mild unsteadiness can happen when you suddenly get up from a sitting or lying position. This can also happen when straightening up from a bent over position which is believed to be the result of a sudden loss of blood to the brain at that particular moment. In this situation, this type of dizziness is nature's way of telling you to lie down. This will help your heart pump more blood to the brain. This is not a serious condition. At one time or another, we've all had such a sensation.

Low blood pressure will also lessen blood flow to the brain with the result of light-headedness or giddiness. The person sees spots before his or her eyes. He/she may feel as though he/she is going to faint or may experience overall weakness. Lying down helps this situation. Certain situations such as the sight of blood, emotional tension, physical and nervous exhaustion or even an overheated room may cause a sudden drop in blood pressure and bring about dizziness. Although this might frighten you, the condition is not serious.

Half of the battle in treating a case of dizziness is finding out what brought it on. Generally speaking, occasional light-headedness or giddiness without any other symptom is not serious. But if this condition seems to hang on without an obvious cause, you should consult your doctor.

It may be emphasized that although many causes of dizziness are known, there are cases of dizziness for which a cause cannot be found. Some types of dizziness may not be cured. In most instances, however, this condition can be relieved.

Dizziness featuring a spinning sensation known as vertigo and occurring over an extended period of time should be discussed with your primary care provider.

If your need is urgent, and the student health service is closed, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call 911 for an ambulance.

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