
Evaluation of “dizziness”

For clinicians dizziness is a very non-specific term. When we hear this complaint, it is often an alarm that prompts further questioning. Often times patients find it hard to describe the feeling of dizziness, but often it is described as a feeling of “spinning or tilting”, or a feeling of “about to fall or passing out.” Some patients often describe dizziness as a feeling of lightheadedness or an inability to walk straight.

Dizziness could be caused by many different things. Some of the most common causes are listed below:

- Dizziness caused by heart disease: heart attack or arrhythmia (irregular heart rhythm)
- Medications: over medication or side effects of blood pressure medication, diuretics, pain medication, Antidepressants, sedatives, some antibiotics
- Brain injury or disease: stroke, tumors, migraines
- Poor diet: low blood glucose levels and dehydration
- Inadequate blood supply: anemia, blood loss due to internal or external hemorrhage
- Dysfunction or damage to structures in the ear: vertigo

The most important assessment in the evaluation of dizziness is obtaining a detailed medical history. Understanding your medical conditions as well as medication that you are on will help your physician assess the cause of your dizziness. Because some of the causes of dizziness are serious in nature, your physician may ask for further testing such as CT scans of the head, carotid ultrasounds, EKG, halter monitor, stress testing and echocardiogram of the heart.

Lastly, you should seek immediate help if you are having dizziness associated with the following conditions as they maybe a sign of a serious condition such as stroke:

- New or severe headache
- Temperature greater than 100.4°F (38°C)
- Seeing double or having trouble seeing clearly
- Trouble speaking or hearing
- Weakness in an arm or leg
- Passing out
- Numbness or tingling
- Chest pain
- Vomiting that will not stop

Remember, always tell you physician if you are feeling “dizziness,” as it is never too little of a complaint to report.

Reference: UpToDate.com

http://www.uptodate.com/contents/approach-to-the-patient-with-dizziness?source=search_result&selectedTitle=1%7E150