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## Vertigo

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### Definition

Vertigo refers to the subjective impression that either one's body is moving or turning (when it is not) or that the things in one's environment are spinning or moving (when they are not). It is a symptom and not a disease. Vertigo should be distinguished from dizziness, with which it is frequently confused. The latter is usually described as feelings of lightheadedness, faintness, or unsteadiness. Normally, one's sense of equilibrium requires a constant interaction between various peripheral and central mechanisms, including the labyrinthine structures of the inner ear (utricle, saccule, and semicircular canals), vestibular nuclei, vision, and proprioceptive feedback.

Vertigo usually results from damage to one or more of these systems, their connections, or their failure to work in concert with one another. Associated symptoms may include nausea, vomiting, nystagmus, feeling faint or signs of pallor, and difficulty walking. Benign paroxysmal position vertigo (BPPV) is a common and often easily treatable condition resulting from temporary displacement of otolithic crystals in the inner ear.

### Cross-References

► [Vestibular System](#)

### References and Readings

- Ropper, A. H., & Brown, R. H. (2005). *Adams and Victor's principles of neurology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Troost, B. T. (2004). Dizziness and vertigo. In W. G. Bradley, R. B. Daroff, G. M. Fenichel, & J. Jankovic (Eds.), *Neurology in clinical practice* (Vol. I, pp. 233–245). Philadelphia: Butterworth/Heinemann.