

# **COPING**

### **HEAD POSITION**

Chair positioning, vibrating equipment, and other factors can make visiting the dentist challenging for vestibular patients.

## **ARTICLE**

086

DID THIS ARTICLE HELP YOU? SUPPORT VEDA @ VESTIBULAR.ORG

5018 NE 15th Ave. Portland, OR 97211 1-800-837-8428 info@vestibular.org vestibular.org

# Dentist's Guide to the Dizzy Patient

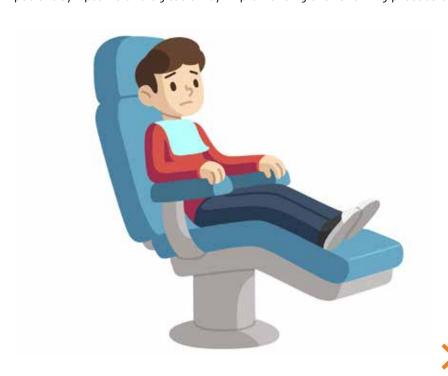
By Teresa Hughes, D.D.S.

Dizziness, vertigo, and disequilibrium are symptoms frequently reported to physicians. Common causes include benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis, Meniere's disease, vestibular migraine, medications, head and neck trauma, blood-flow irregularities, autoimmune conditions, stress, and allergies.<sup>1</sup>

Various types of trauma have been associated with traumatic BPPV, including head trauma, whiplash injury, ear surgery, or dental surgery.<sup>2</sup> BPPV symptoms may include a sense of spinning or moving typically brought on by head movement, dizziness, lightheadedness, unsteadiness, nausea, and vomiting.<sup>3</sup>

Tinnitus is also affiliated with vestibular disorders. Tinnitus can be caused by temporomandibular disorders.<sup>4</sup>

Dental visits are especially challenging for patients with dizziness and vertigo because dental chair positioning, equipment, and instruments can worsen their condition. Fortunately, dental office personnel can minimize patient symptoms and agitation by implementing the following protocols:



1

### **DIZZINESS PROTOCOL**

- Schedule dizziness patients at their best time of day.
- Symptoms can come on suddenly, resulting in possible last minute scheduling changes.
- Offer an arm for the patient to hold while walking, as hallways and busy pattern flooring exacerbate disequilibrium.
- Accommodate a friend or family member who may accompany the patient.
- Communicate while sitting knee-to-knee and in front of the patient as much as possible.
   Politeness eases tension and the closeness will aid those with hearing loss and/or tinnitus.
- Speak slowly while keeping your head and arms still. Be patient as these patients tend to behave anxiously due to their physical symptoms.
- Do not move the dental chair without discussing it with the patient first. Some patients will want to sit forward while the chair reclines.
- Ask the patient for positioning feedback and always keep their head above their feet.
- Reduce light as much as possible and offer dark safety glasses.
- Empower the patient by allowing them to take breaks, if needed, by raising their hand.
- During the procedure, inform the patient when to anticipate vibration and check on their wellbeing.
- Conversation should pertain to the patient.
  Do not engage in side-talk, which can be distracting and cause anxiety, unless the patient initiates it to relieve tension.
- Move your operator chair and change your position to accommodate patients who cannot lie supine and/or turn their head.

# THE FOLLOWING WILL ALSO INCREASE COMFORT:

- · Offer a neck pillow and blanket.
- Avoid scents such candles, perfume, cologne, and air fresheners.
- Do not wear print scrubs or patterned clothing, as busy visual environments cause discomfort for people with vestibular disorders.
- If BPPV is suspected to be a complication of dental treatment, refer the patient to an otolaryngologist or physical threapist for evaluation.

### REFERENCES

- Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA). Causes of Dizziness. https://vestibular.org/aboutvestibular-disorders/causes-dizziness Accessed April 15, 2019.
- 2. Balatsouras, DG, Koukoutsis, G, Aspris A, et al. Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo Secondary to Mild Head Trauma. Annals of Otology, Rhinology & Laryngology. 2017;126 (I): 54-60.
- The Mayo Clinic. Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV). Available at https://www. mayoclinic.org/diseasesconditions/vertigo/ symptoms-causes/syc-20370055 Accessed April 15, 2019.
- The Mayo Clinic. Tinnitus. Available at https:// www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ tinnitus/symptoms-causes/syc-20350156 Accessed April 15, 2019.
- Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA). What are the Symptoms of a Vestibular Disorder? Available at: https://vestibular. org/understanding-vestibular-disorder/ symptoms#vision Accessed April 15, 2019.

©2019 Vestibular Disorders Association VeDA's publications are protected under copyright. For more information, see our permissions guide at vestibular.org. *This document is not intended as a* substitute for professional health care.

2

NOTES:						
			AR DISORDE E 15th Ave. Port	RS ASSOCIAT :land, OR 97211	TION	
		1-800-837-8428	info@vestibu	ılar.org vestibu	ular.org	
Did thi	s free p	publicat	ion fron	n VeDA f	nelp you	?
		onal articles like to VeDA today.	this continue to	be available to v	estibular patients	s like you by
SUPPORT VE	:DA					
One-time gift:	\$40	\$50	\$75	\$100	\$250	other
Monthly gift:	\$10	\$15	Section \$25	<b>\$35</b>	\$50	other
Check this	box if you pre	efer that your do	nation remain a	nonymous.		
PAYMENT INI	FORMATION					
Donations glad	lly accepted on	line at <b>http://ves</b>	<b>tibular.org</b> . Ched	ck or money order	in US funds, paya	able to VeDA.
Visa MC Am	nex Discover					
			Card number		Exp. date	CVV code
Billing address	of card (if diff	ferent from maili	ng information)			
MAILING INF	ORMATION					
Name		Te	lephone	Email	Email	
		Cit		State/Prov	rince 2	Zip

[ UPDATED SUMMER 2019 ] VESTIBULAR.ORG :: 086 / COPING 3