

- Vertigo

Health

What's up with...

VERTIGO

Getting a dizzy, spinning feeling and haven't touched a drop of alcohol? Here's why.

BY KAYLA BLANTON

If you've ever had a little too much to drink and felt as if the room was spinning, you have some understanding of what vertigo feels like – except the dizziness from vertigo isn't from those vinos. It's usually about your inner ear.

WHAT IS VERTIGO?

"It's the sensation of movement, or of surrounding objects moving when they're not," explains physician Dr Jared Braunstein, and it's something that 30 per cent of people will experience at least once in their lives. The sense of spinning may be accompanied by nausea, vomiting, hearing loss, ringing in the ears as well as blurry vision, balance impairments and headaches, adds physiotherapist Daniel Flaherty. Vertigo can usually be traced to a malfunction of the vestibular system, which includes the inner ear and parts of the brain and is connected to balance. "This system helps the brain perceive acceleration and head movement," says Daniel. But certain triggers can throw that delicate system off-kilter.

COMMON CAUSES

■ EAR INFECTIONS

Inflammation or infection in the inner ear can affect balance and cause vertigo.

in the inner ear are displaced by certain head movements, says Dr Braunstein.

■ BENIGN PAROXYSMAL POSITIONAL VERTIGO (BPPV)

This can occur when calcium carbonate crystals

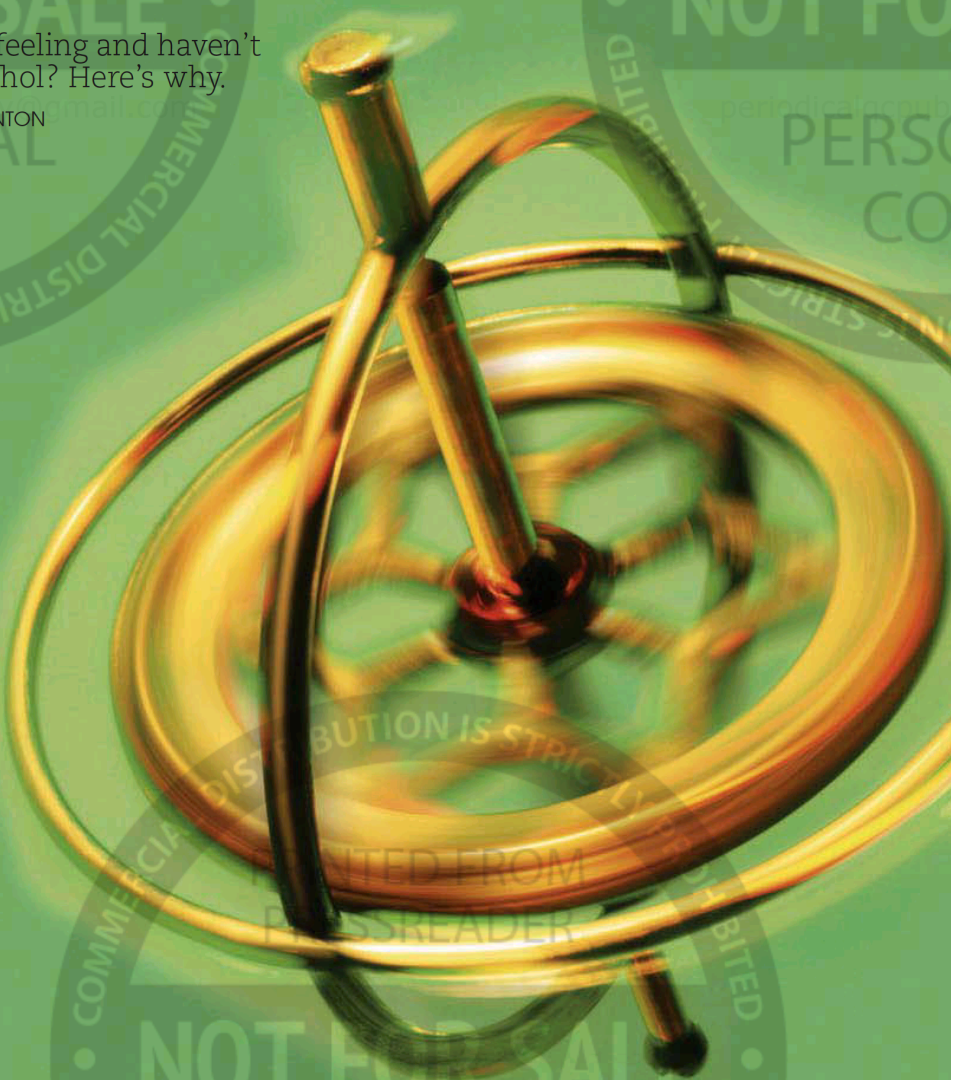
■ VESTIBULOPATHY
This malfunction of the vestibular system causes your brain to think that your head is moving when it's actually not.

■ MIGRAINES

Vestibular migraines can cause dizzy spells or vertigo along with lightheadedness and pain. If you have vertigo after a head injury or with serious symptoms (like chest pain, facial drooping or vision loss), see a doctor straightaway.

HOW TO STOP THE SPINNING

Solutions depend on what's causing it: Lying down or sitting in a dark room may help an occasional bout of vertigo go away. Antibiotics can be prescribed for ear infections; antihistamines can help with dizziness. A common treatment for BPPV is the Epley manoeuvre, a set of head movements designed to shift the inner-ear crystals back into their proper place. For people with vestibulopathy, vestibular rehab exercises can help the brain recognise that it's receiving a faulty signal. **P**



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