

A Different Angle on Vertigo

Vertigo, aside from being a good movie, is a condition that affects a large percentage of our population. Plain and simple vertigo is dizziness. What causes the dizziness and what to do about that is what I hope to touch on in this article.

A few weeks back I wrote “Is Your Head On Straight?” In that article I explained what happens when your atlas, the first vertebrae in your neck, which supports your skull, is out of alignment. That misalignment, in addition to structurally causing your head to be off center, can cause a number of other problems. One of those problems is vertigo.

To get a medical handle on this topic I will quote from The Merck Manual 14th edition. “True vertigo, as distinguished from faintness, lightheadedness, or other forms of ‘dizziness,’ results from a disturbance somewhere in the equilibratory apparatus: vestibule; semicircular canals; **8th (cranial) nerve; vestibular nuclei in the brainstem and their temporal lobe connections; and eyes.**” There are other forms of disturbance mentioned even crystals forming in the ears causing vertigo, yet the one thing they have in common is they all point to some form of disturbance.

Let me expound on how some of these disturbances are caused by the atlas being out of alignment. The vertebral artery, which supplies blood to your brain, goes through the atlas en route to the brain. According to Lothar Wicke, author of Atlas of Radiologic Anatomy, that very crucial artery to the brain, makes four 90-degree-turns just underneath the skull. A quote from the same book sheds some light on vertigo. “Symptoms of vertigo, nausea, tinnitus, and visual disturbances may occur from occlusions of the vertebral artery associated with axial rotation of the atlas.” In simple lay terms... if that first bone under your skull is out of alignment and when you turn your head from side to side you momentarily make a bad problem worse. Dizziness can then be brought on by a brief disturbance to that vital blood supply to your brain.

Another causative factor could be irritation to the vestibulocochlear nerve (the 8th cranial nerve) by the atlas misalignment. Basically that is the same nerve that controls your sense of balance, you know the one that makes you seasick when you have been rolling with the waves from side to side to side. When the atlas vertebrae is out of its proper alignment it causes a disturbance at the section of the brain stem where that very nerve has its origin. Once again it doesn't take 8 years of college to see how an irritation to that area of the nervous system could produce the symptoms of dizziness. To put it simply, the pathway from the brain to the body part (in this case the balance center of the body) if disturbed can cause *problems*. We have had positive results with a number of patients with vertigo by giving a very light and specific adjustment to their atlas vertebrae.

CASE OF THE WEEK: This case was so appropriate I will just share what she had written in her own words.

“ I had suffered with vertigo since 1993, couldn't sleep on my back, couldn't bend down and pick up things. Lots of mornings when I would get up and it would feel like the left

side of my head was full, and when I would lay down it was like I was floating. The medicine the medical doctor gave me for vertigo made me feel worse than the vertigo did so I learned to cope with my limitation. I thought vertigo was something I would just have to live with. After two weeks of going to see Dr. Gallagher all the fullness in my head was gone. I can sleep on my back. I can bend over and pick up things with out getting dizzy. I am now doing simple things, like turning my head without turning my body, something I thought I could never do again. And even lying back in the shampoo bowl getting my hair washed without getting dizzy.

The choice is yours. Medicate the symptoms and live with the limitations, or see if there is a correctable cause to your dizziness, and live the life you were created to live.

Any questions please contact Dr. Gallagher at 303-2213