

FEELING DIZZY?

Your body is trying to tell you something.

By John Thomas, MD

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izziness, like headaches, is a phenomenon that almost everybody will experience at some point in their lives. This should be reassuring to you when you are feeling dizzy, because anything that common is not likely to be imminently deadly. So, the first thing to do if you feel dizzy is to sit down, relax and don't panic.

Like pain, dizziness is a way that your brain communicates with you. When you feel dizzy, you instinctively feel the need to sit or lie down, which is exactly what your body needs. You may feel as though you are going to pass out. In fact, this is exactly what will happen if you don't sit or lie down immediately.

IF YOU ARE DIZZY

- Don't panic!
- Sit or lie down.
- Drink a little extra clear fluid, without caffeine.
- Eat or drink something sweet.

Call your doctor if the dizziness doesn't go away, or if you have other concerns.

Although many things can cause dizziness, the two most common reasons fall under the category of common sense: dehydration and low blood sugar.

Dehydration means you are too dry. Without enough fluid in your bloodstream, your blood pressure drops and the blood flow to the brain drops just enough for it to sense a low oxygen level. Don't worry, it's not enough to cause a stroke. Your brain reacts by stealing blood from the rest of your body, which makes you feel dizzy and this causes the feeling that you need to lie down.

The way to prevent dehydration is obvious: drink more fluids! By the way, coffee doesn't count. Caffeine is a diuretic (a drug that causes urination). You'll only end up expelling more fluid than you are taking in. So coffee, tea, and soft drinks with caffeine actually worsen dehydration, even if they seem to quench your thirst at the time.

Low blood sugar is a condition where you do not have enough glucose in your bloodstream and your tissues cannot get the energy they need to function well. You will begin to feel weak, nauseous and dizzy when this occurs. Responding with a quick jolt of rapidly absorbable energy, such as fruit juice or a piece of hard candy, is a good idea. Episodes of low blood sugar can be avoided by eating healthy snacks every hour or so throughout the day, instead of relying solely on 2 to 3 meals per day.

There are, of course, other causes of dizziness. Vertigo refers to a dizzying sensation of imbalance or abnormal motion, such as spinning or feeling the floor move up and down. It often has different causes than mere dizziness, although the most common causes of vertigo are also usually benign. Dizziness can also be due to medications that you may be taking. Your doctor can help you to determine if that might be the case for you. In rare cases, dizziness is the sign of a serious underlying condition. This might be true if your dizziness does not respond to food, fluids, rest or medication changes, or becomes progressively worse over time. You should definitely let your doctor know if such is the case with yourself.



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The Elliot.
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