

# Guide to Chronic Dizziness

## What is chronic dizziness?

Dizziness is when you feel faint, woozy, off-balance, spinning or light-headed, like you are about to fall over. **Chronic dizziness** is when you feel these things long term (more than 3 months). It often begins as a single episode, but it doesn't go away completely. It can become more frequent, severe, and troublesome.

## What causes chronic dizziness?

Chronic dizziness may be caused by:

- Medications
- Heart disease or an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia)
- Medical conditions like diabetes, unstable blood pressure, or thyroid disease
- Conditions involving the brain
- Nerve damage in the legs or spine

It is possible that your doctor has already checked for these problems. If they are not the cause, you may be referred for additional testing.

## How can my doctor tell if I have chronic dizziness?

Chronic dizziness can be hard to figure out. The best place to start is with a thorough check of your hearing and the inner ear or parts of your ear that affect your balance. This can be done by an **audiologist** [ah-dee-AHL-uh-jist] or a **otolaryngologist** [ah-tow-lair-in-GAHL-uh-jist], — also called an ENT. If the testing points to a problem in the inner ear, the ENT may treat you or refer you to a **neurotologist** [nur-oh-ah-TAHL-uh-jist] to see if you would benefit from a procedure or surgery.

If the testing does not point to a problem in the inner ear, you may need to see a different specialist, such as a:

- **Neurologist** [nur-AHL-uh-jist]. This specialist treats problems with the brain, nerves, or spinal cord.
- **Neuro-ophthalmologist** [nur-oh-opf-thah-MAHL-uh-jist]. This specialist examines the connection between vision, balance and the brain.
- **Vestibular** [ves-TIB-yoo-lahr] **rehabilitation specialist**. These are physical and occupational therapists who specialize in improving the symptoms of dizziness and balance problems.

Testing may show that you have a condition called **persistent postural perceptual dizziness (3PD)** or **vestibular (inner ear) migraine**. Both cause chronic dizziness and are treatable with a combination of medications and therapy.

## Where can I find more information?

- Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA): [vestibular.org](https://www.vestibular.org)
- Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA) fact sheet: [Persistent Postural-Perceptual Dizziness](#)

This education content was developed in partnership with the Department of Neurology at the University of Utah Health. Check out the **Dizzy School** for more information.

