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Dizziness is **an** imprecise term that can refer to a sense of disorientation in space, vertigo, or lightheadedness. It can also refer to disequilibrium or a non-specific feeling, **such** as giddiness or foolishness.

Dizziness is a common medical complaint, affecting 20-30% of persons. Dizziness is broken down into 4 main subtypes: vertigo (~25-50%), disequilibrium (less than ~15%), presyncope (less than ~15%), and nonspecific dizziness (~10%).

- Vertigo is the sensation of spinning or having one's surroundings spin about them. Many people find vertigo very disturbing and often report associated nausea and vomiting.
- Presyncope describes lightheadedness or feeling faint; the **name** relates to syncope, which is actually fainting.
- Disequilibrium is the sensation of being off **balance** and is most often characterized by frequent falls in a specific direction. This condition is not often associated with nausea or vomiting.
- Non-specific dizziness may **be** psychiatric in origin. It is a diagnosis of exclusion and can sometimes **be** brought about by hyperventilation

## Mechanism and causes

Many conditions cause dizziness because multiple parts of the **body** are required for maintaining **balance** including the inner **ear**, eyes, muscles, **skeleton**, and the nervous system. Thus dizziness can **be** caused by a variety of problems and may reflect a focal process (**such** as one affecting **balance** or coordination) or a diffuse one (**such** as a toxic exposure or low perfusion state).

### Common causes of dizziness include:

- Inadequate blood supply to the **brain** due to:
  - A sudden fall in blood pressure
  - **Heart** problems or artery blockages
  - Anaemias, **such** as Vitamin B12 deficiency anemia, Iron deficiency anemia
- Loss or distortion of vision or visual cues
- Standing too quickly/prolonged standing
- Disorders of the inner **ear**
- Dehydration
- Distortion of **brain**/nervous function by medications **such** as anticonvulsants and sedatives
- Dysfunction of cervical proprioception
- Side effects from other prescription drugs, **such** as proton-pump inhibitors or Coumadin (warfarin)

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