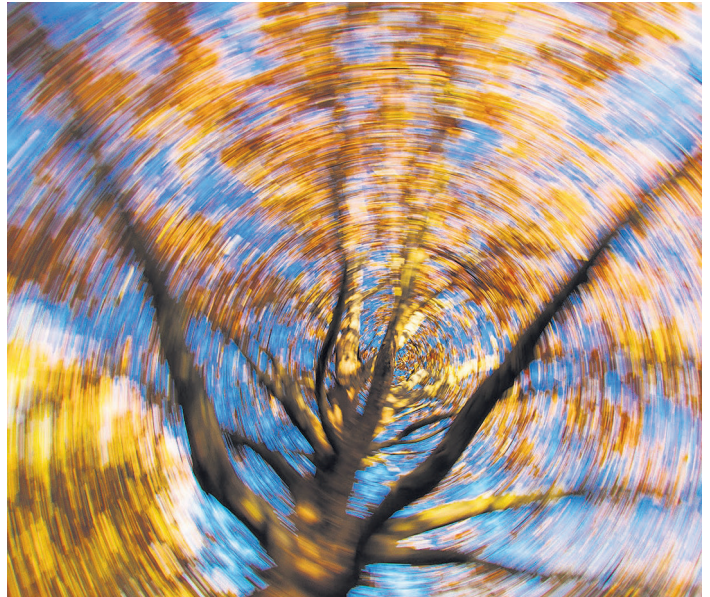


# Feel dizzy? Here's what you should do

Dr Oh Jen Jen, head and consultant at Mount Alvernia Hospital's 24hr Clinic and Emergency Services, explains what causes that lightheaded feeling, and when to see a doctor



## What are the possible causes of giddiness?

Conditions that may cause giddiness include:

- Brain-related conditions: stroke, bleeding, tumour or migraine
- Vestibular or inner ear disorders
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- High or low blood pressure
- High or low blood sugar
- Low haemoglobin (anaemia)
- Electrolyte disorders such as low sodium levels
- Side effects from medications

## Is giddiness the same as vertigo?

Giddiness is a feeling of lightheadedness or imbalance, while vertigo is a sensation that you or your surrounding environment are moving or spinning. Vertigo usually occurs with inner ear disorders, but also overlaps with other conditions such as migraines and certain types of strokes.

## Do I need to consult a doctor when I feel giddy?

You should seek medical attention if the giddiness is severe, or if you experience any of the following:

- Slurred speech
- Double vision
- Facial drooping
- Weakness or numbness in the arm or leg
- An unsteady gait
- Recent head trauma
- Near fainting or loss of consciousness
- Chest pain, palpitations or cold sweats
- Bleeding such as black or bloody

stools, heavy menstruation

- Recurrent or prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea, especially with poor oral intake
- Significantly high or low blood pressure or blood sugar readings

## What if I still feel giddy even after lying down, or constantly feel giddy?

An inner ear disorder can cause giddiness on lying down, and the symptoms may last a few days.

You can consider self-medicating and monitoring the situation first if you were previously diagnosed with an inner ear disorder, the giddiness is similar to past episodes, and you do not experience any other symptoms from the list mentioned above. However, if the giddiness worsens or any symptoms from the above list occur, you should proceed to see a doctor immediately

## Who should consult a doctor even if their symptoms are mild?

The elderly are at higher risk of suffering from a stroke, heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. They also tend to be on multiple medications, some of which may cause side effects.

In addition, the slower reflexes, visual impairment and frailty of the elderly increase their risk of falls and injuries if the giddiness is not treated in a timely manner.

This group should be assessed by a doctor to rule out more serious causes of giddiness, and commence appropriate treatment early.

Above:

Giddiness may be a sign of more serious health conditions. Seek medical treatment if you exhibit other symptoms such as slurred speech, weakness or numbness in the arms or legs, cold sweat, prolonged vomiting or diarrhoea.

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