



What's Making You Dizzy?

By Sari Harrar



Photo: Jeff Harris Studio

Millions of people suffer debilitating dizzy spells. But there's help—and it starts with getting the right diagnosis.

One August day in 1994, Linda Borne's world began spinning—and barely paused for the next year and a half. "I was bringing my daughter home from swim practice, and my 14-month-old son was in the car, too," says Borne, now 48, who lives with her family in Canton, Georgia. "I pulled into the driveway just as I had a thousand times before—a normal turn, not fast. Suddenly, everything around me was moving, as if I were on a merry-go-round."

Borne managed to get her car into the garage—"I don't know how I did it"—and asked her daughter to help get the toddler inside. Then she spent most of the next 18 months in bed, nauseated and, at times, vomiting, as her husband, relatives, and friends pitched in to keep the household running. "I saw seven doctors," she says. "One suggested cutting the vestibular nerve on the left side of my head, which controls balance. But that didn't seem like a good idea."

Finally, Borne made an appointment at the renowned Shea Ear Clinic in Memphis. Her vertigo was diagnosed as Ménière's disease—a fluid imbalance in the inner ear. A steroid injection eased the pressure in her ear, and doctors prescribed a low-salt diet to help reduce fluid retention. "I got my life back, 100 percent," she says. "When you're dizzy, you look normal on the outside, but on the inside you're just trying to get through every moment of every day. It isn't really living."

Episodes of vertigo—whether it's a mild sensation that the room is spinning or an attack so intense you feel as if you're on a Tilt-A-Whirl—are responsible for 3.2 million visits to doctors' offices and emergency rooms each year. "Dizziness is very limiting. Sometimes you can't drive, you can't predict what's going to happen to you," says ear, nose, and throat specialist Anil Lalwani, MD, chairman of the department of otolaryngology at New York University Medical Center. "It can destroy your life—but it doesn't have to."

Once dismissed as a sign of mental imbalance, dizziness is now being taken seriously: In the past few years, dozens of specialized centers for dizziness and balance disorders have opened across the United States, and a number of surprisingly simple and often noninvasive procedures can resolve most cases. The trick is getting a correct diagnosis.

"Dizziness can be caused by more than two dozen medical conditions," says Douglas E. Mattox, MD, chairman of the department of otolaryngology at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, "and there are no tests for the major ones, so a patient's description is very important."

The top causes of dizziness and the best ways to find relief

From the July 2009 issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine*

Read more: <http://www.oprah.com/health/Causes-of-Dizziness#ixzz2RD0KQw5U>

RE: July, 2009 issue of O Magazine article entitled "Spin Control"

The Shea Ear Clinic is extremely honored to be recognized in the July issue of *O, the Oprah Winfrey* magazine. The story of Linda Borne parallels the frustrating patient journey for too people seeking quality care for their hearing and balance disorders. We are often the 3rd, 4th or 5th ENT specialist a patient sees before being properly diagnosed and receiving proper treatment. Patients come from all over the United States and many foreign countries seeking our help. Typically, they are emotionally drained and tired of throwing their hard-earned money at being misdiagnosed, mismanaged or told there is nothing anyone can do. Sadly, those are the lucky ones. Others have had an incorrect surgery performed or perhaps the correct operation performed incorrectly. Patients come to the Shea Ear Clinic in desperation and leave like Linda Borne, still very appreciative even 15 years later, for having their life back.

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