

**Q. I told my doctor that I get dizzy when I lay back into bed. He said I have “ear rocks”. What does this mean?**

A. Your doctor was describing benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV). In BPPV, calcium carbonate crystals that belong in the inner ear have broken free from where they belong and are now floating freely in the inner ear fluids, causing symptoms when they stimulate the balance organ sensors. Doctors often refer to these crystals as particles, debris, sand or rocks.

BPPV is a common problem with a very simple treatment. While laying down, the patient is guided through a series of very specific movements that cause the crystals to move out of the affected part of the inner ear. Some ear, nose and throat (ENT) physicians and physical therapists have had special training to perform these maneuvers.

BPPV often occurs in conjunction with other inner ear dizziness disorders. If the patient's history suggests additional inner ear problems, the ENT doctor may order balance function testing to further investigate this possibility.