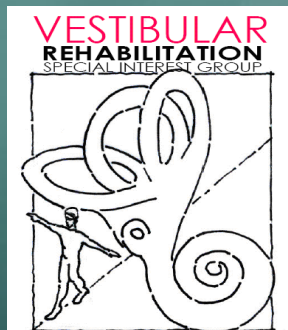


FACT SHEET



Meniere's Disease

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What is Meniere's disease?

Meniere's disease is an inner ear disorder that causes repeated attacks of 1) vertigo (spinning), 2) hearing loss, 3) tinnitus (ringing in the ear), and 4) fullness or pressure in the ear. Attacks often come on suddenly and last a few minutes or many hours. Often, people do not feel any of these symptoms in between attacks. The exact cause of Meniere's disease is not known. One thought is that the fluid in the inner ear builds up, causing pressure within the inner ear. Meniere's disease can run in families and is also associated with migraine headaches.

The severity of symptoms may be different with each attack and between people. Every symptom may not be there with every attack. Some people have severe symptoms while others only have mild symptoms. Some people have attacks many times a month. Other people may go months or years in between attacks. During a Meniere's attack, a person may also have nausea and vomiting, and they may not be able to walk or function. Because the symptoms are not consistent or predictable, many people experience frustration, anxiety, and depression because they cannot plan and control their lives.

How does Meniere's disease progress?

In the beginning stages of the disease, people experience attacks of vertigo and hearing loss or tinnitus, but return to normal between attacks. As the disease progresses over many months or years, low-frequency hearing loss may still be there between attacks. In the later stage, significant low- and high-frequency hearing loss is always there and the person has a constant feeling of imbalance.

What is the treatment for Meniere's disease?

There is no known cure for Meniere's disease. However, some medical treatments and lifestyle changes can often help people feel better. Because the disease is thought to be caused by fluid build-up in the inner ear, steps to reduce the fluid in the body will sometimes help control symptoms. For example, doctors may prescribe diuretics (water pills) and a low-sodium diet. A balanced lifestyle can help people with Meniere's disease to cope and reduce the intensity or frequency of attacks. This could include eating a well-balanced diet with frequent small meals, regular exercise, consistent and enough sleep, stress-relieving practices such as tai chi, meditation, guided imagery, or yoga, and limiting caffeine and alcohol. Doctors may also prescribe medicines for vertigo and nausea to use during an attack.

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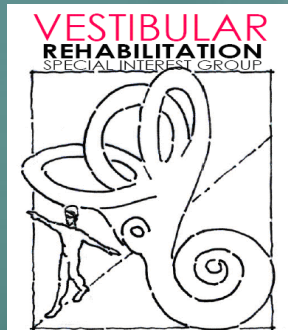
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Meniere's Disease



In severe cases, treatment to control the vertigo could include placing a strong medicine into the inner ear that damages the sensory cells or surgery to cut vestibular nerve. These treatments are considered carefully. The patient must take into account the severity and frequency of vertigo attacks, and the potential adverse effects of treatment or surgery. These treatments can lead to good control of attacks and much less symptoms. Hearing aids may be needed for severe hearing loss.

How can physical therapy help in the management of Meniere's disease?

Physical therapists can teach people about the lifestyle changes mentioned above. If attacks are bad enough that a person needs help walking, therapists can help make recommendations for safety during or right after an attack. If someone starts to have dizziness, motion sickness, or imbalance in between attacks, physical therapists can help improve these symptoms with certain exercises. Physical therapists may also help in the recovery after the procedures mentioned above that damage the sensory cells or cut the vestibular nerve.



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