

MENIERE'S DISEASE



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A disorder of the inner ear that causes a variety of symptoms. In most cases, only one ear is involved. It usually affects adults between ages 30 and 60, and it is slightly more common in women than men. Meniere's is named for the French doctor who described it in 1861.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Original symptoms often start suddenly, and recurrent attacks may come on with no warning. Attacks may occur daily, or in some persons, just once a year. Attacks may last 30 minutes to 2 hours, or longer. Symptoms may be mild to severe.
- Vertigo (feeling that you are spinning or everything around you is spinning).
- Noises in the affected ear (tinnitus), such as roaring, ringing, or buzzing.
- Hearing loss that comes and goes and often increases over time.
- Feeling pressure or pain in the affected ear.
- Nausea, vomiting, and sweating may occur with the vertigo. Stomach discomfort, headache, and diarrhea may occur also.

CAUSES

The exact cause is unknown. There is a variety of suggested causes, and research continues.

RISK INCREASES WITH

Unknown (mostly). Salty diets, exposure to excessive noise, stress, recent viral illness, allergies, immune disorders, ear infections, or genetic factors may play a role.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

There is no cure. Attacks of Meniere's disease recur and worsen over many years. Symptoms can often be relieved with one or more types of treatment. The disorder is frustrating, but not life-threatening.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Permanent hearing loss.
- Chronic tinnitus.
- The symptoms can affect all aspects of a person's life.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and an exam of the ear. Medical tests may include blood studies, balance studies, various hearing tests, and other tests to rule out other disorders with similar symptoms.

- Treatment usually consists of lifestyle changes (such as with your diet) and drugs, or sometimes surgery, to relieve the symptoms.

- During an attack, lie flat on a surface that does not move. Avoid bright lights. Focus eyes on an object that does not move. Don't eat or drink (to avoid nausea). Once the attack passes, get up slowly. You may feel sleepy and want to sleep for awhile.

- Learn techniques to control stress in your life. This helps some people with Meniere's.

- Avoid noisy places or situations.

- Quit smoking. Find a way to stop that works for you.

- Various treatments may be tried for the tinnitus.

- Different types of surgery may be recommended for severe symptoms or to prevent further hearing loss.

- To learn more: Ear Foundation/Meniere's Network, 1817 Patterson St., Nashville, TN 37203; (800) 545-4327; website: www.earfoundation.com.

MEDICATIONS

- Your health care provider may prescribe:
 - Antinausea drugs, to reduce nausea and vomiting.
 - Scopolamine patches, to treat nausea.
 - Tranquilizers, to reduce dizziness.
 - Antihistamines, to help lessen symptoms.
 - Diuretics, to decrease fluid in the inner ear.
 - Antibiotics placed in the middle ear.
 - Drugs, to suppress an overactive immune system.

ACTIVITY

- Don't drive, climb ladders, or work around dangerous machinery.

DIET

- Salt causes the body to retain fluid. By decreasing salt in your diet, it will help to reduce the amount of fluid in the inner ear.

- Limit the use of caffeine and alcohol.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of Meniere's disease.

- The following occur during treatment: decreased hearing in either ear, persistent vomiting, fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher.

- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page