

Relief for Ménière's Disease Symptoms

Ménière's disease is a disorder affecting balance. Though there is no known cause or cure, numerous treatments exist.¹

The disorder predominantly affects Caucasians between 20 and 30 years of age, with both sexes affected equally. Three-fourths of people with Ménière's have the disorder in only one ear. Progressive hearing loss commonly accompanies the condition.²

An estimated 3 million to 5 million people in the United States have Ménière's, with 100,000 new cases diagnosed each year.³

The disorder is caused by an abnormality in the vestibular labyrinth, a portion of the inner ear.³ When the head moves, a liquid called endolymph fluid also moves in the labyrinth, causing nerve receptors to signal the brain about the body's motion.

Symptoms include vertigo, severe nausea, vomiting and sweating, tinnitus, loss of hearing, pressure in the affected ear, loss of balance, headaches, abdominal discomfort and diarrhea.³

Since numerous diseases and conditions feature the same symptoms¹, diagnosis involves excluding or eliminating the likelihood of oth-



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er diseases. Hearing testing is very helpful in making the diagnosis.

Ménière's patients may have low frequency or mixed low and high frequency hearing loss.⁴ Particularly significant is a documented fluctuating hearing loss, especially in the low frequencies.

The audiologist testing a patient in the midst of a full-blown Ménière's attack will find ear pressure, an increase in tinnitus that may sound like a low-pitched roar, muffled hearing and then vertigo.

Treatment

The best way to deal with an acute Ménière's attack is to lie down and stay as motionless as possible, keeping your eyes open and fixed on a stationary object.² When the vertigo passes, get up slowly. Many patients feel extremely tired following an episode and need to sleep for several hours.

There are medications to help reduce the severity and frequency of vertigo by regulating the fluid pressure in the inner ear. An otologist can determine if any of these medications would work. In addition, your otologist most likely will recommend dietary restrictions, since they seem to provide significant improvement in most patients.

Some 70 percent of patients with Ménière's eventually experience remission of vertigo symptoms; a variety of surgical treatments often are considered for the remainder. Currently, Gentamicin injections across the ear drum are frequently used and under clinical trial at many institutions as treatment for the condition.

Even though management of Ménière's continues to be varied, relief from symptoms is available today for most patients with the disorder. x

References

1. Ménière's Disease Information Center—The Start Page. Accessed via www.geocities.com/menieresinfo/info-start.html
2. Vestibular Disorders Association. Accessed via www.vestibular.org/menieres.html
3. Johns Hopkins Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery—Ménière's Disease. (2000). Accessed via www.hopkinsmedicine.org/otolaryngology/disorders/balance/menieres.html
4. Ménière's Syndrome. Accessed via www.bme.jhu.edu/labs/chb/disorders/menieres.html
5. Trends and Recent Directions in Ménière's Disease. Accessed via <http://oto.wustl.edu/men/recent.htm>

Compiled by Bette Mooney

For More Information

Ménière's Disease Information Center
<http://www.geocities.com/menieresinfo/info.html>

Johns Hopkins Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery—Ménière's Disease
<http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/otolaryngology/disorders/balance/menieres.html>

The Ménière's Page, Department of Otolaryngology, Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO
<http://oto.wustl.edu/men/>

Medifocus
http://www.medifocus1.com/guide_detail.asp?gid=TL008&a=a