

MENIERE'S DISEASE

What is Meniere's disease?

Meniere's disease is an inner ear problem possibly caused by fluid build-up in the inner ear structures. The disease is characterized by spontaneous episodes of severe dizziness (vertigo), ringing in the ears (tinnitus), hearing loss, a feeling of fullness in the ear, headaches, and nausea and vomiting – any combination of these symptoms is possible.

How is Meniere's disease diagnosed?

No single test makes the diagnosis of Meniere's disease. Rather a complete history that includes a detailed description of the pattern of disease presentation, supported by quantitative testing, is required. A complete audiological test battery followed by Videonystagmography (VNG) is performed at our clinic, to confirm the diagnosis. A computed tomography (CT) or Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain may also be ordered to rule out other causes of dizziness.

How is Meniere's disease treated?

Meniere's disease is usually self limiting, therefore the long – term outcome for balance function is good. Although there is no absolute cure for Meniere's disease, the following steps prove to be helpful.

1. Avoid salt and caffeine
2. Avoid smoking and limit alcohol consumption.
3. Stress and psychological issues can exacerbate your symptoms
4. In the case of severe dizziness with nausea, with/without vomiting – rest quietly and take Gravol (as directed by your doctor).
5. For on-going dizziness and prevention of episodes – Serc 8 mg – 16 mg 3 times daily, orally. If you experience side effects while taking this drug, call your doctor. Your doctor may tell you to stop taking Serc, or suggest a way to manage the side effect. The most common side effects are skin rashes and gastric upset.
6. A diuretic may also be prescribed. For example, Dyazide one tablet daily orally. You must see your family physician in one month for blood testing to ensure safety of the medication.
7. If the above fails, a stronger diuretic may be prescribed. Diamox 250 mg twice daily orally. Common side effects include numbness and tingling of the face and hands. If you experience these side effects, stop the medication or contact your pharmacist.
8. If your dizziness is absolutely incapacitating and interfering with the quality of your life, then you may be a candidate for steroid injections through your ear drum.