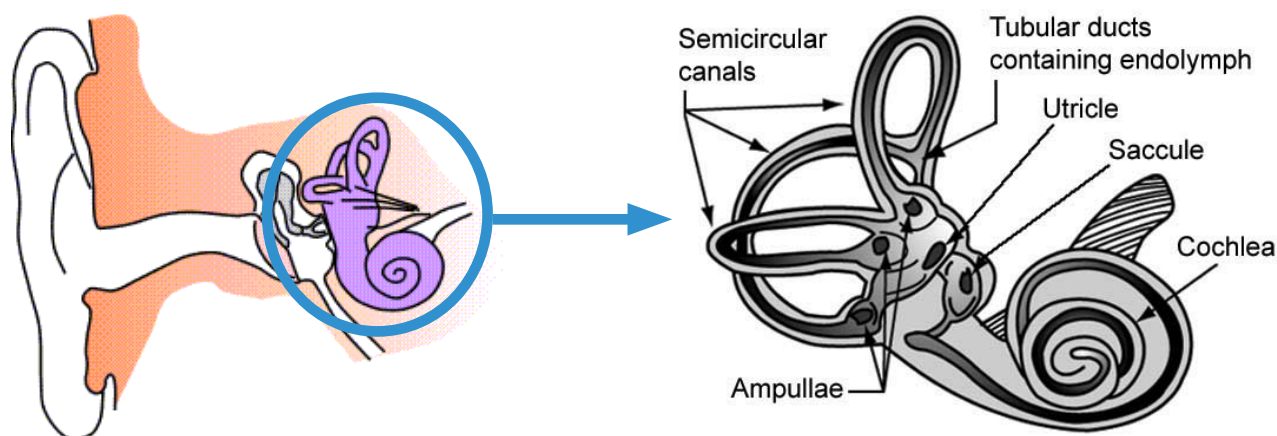


Patient information factsheet

Ménière's disease

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about Ménière's disease. It explains what Ménière's disease is, the symptoms to look out for and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

What is Ménière's disease?



The vestibular system is part of our balance system and is located in the inner ears. It is made up of:

- the semicircular canals (these detect movement in multiple planes)
- the otolith organs (the utricle and saccule) (these sense gravity and linear acceleration (change in height or speed), such as going in a lift or accelerating in the car)

The vestibular system is filled with fluid. In Ménière's disease there is an increase of fluid within the system. This creates an increase in pressure in the structures in the ear and can rupture important membranes. It is this pressure that causes the symptoms of Ménière's disease.

What are the symptoms of Ménière's disease?

There are four main symptoms of Ménière's disease:

- vertigo (the sensation that you or the environment around you is moving)
- hearing loss
- tinnitus (an awareness of sound in the ears or head which is not from an external source)
- aural fullness (a sensation of pressure or fullness in the ear)

These symptoms often occur together in episodes. Episodes can last anywhere from a few minutes to 24 hours.

The three stages of Ménière's disease

Stage one (early) - Unpredictable episodes of vertigo

The main feature of early stage Ménière's disease is intermittent (not continuous) episodes of vertigo that can last minutes or hours. The episodes are usually accompanied by hearing loss, tinnitus and aural fullness in the affected ear. Sometimes the tinnitus or aural fullness can come before the vertigo, but other times there is no warning at all. Between episodes of vertigo, you will usually be symptom-free and your hearing will return to its previous level.

Stage two (intermediate) - Episodes of vertigo, tinnitus and hearing loss

In the intermediate stage, you will still experience episodes of vertigo, but they may be less severe. You will also begin to lose your hearing and tinnitus will become more noticeable in the affected ear. You may experience movement-provoked giddiness after or leading up to episodes.

Stage three (late) - Hearing loss, tinnitus and difficulties with balance

In the late stage of Ménière's disease, vertigo episodes will decrease or stop. However, there will be permanent damage to your vestibular system. You may experience problems with your balance, particularly in the dark. Hearing loss in the affected ear may be severe, and you may experience distortion and recruitment (sensitivity to loud sounds).

What causes Ménière's disease?

The exact cause of Ménière's disease is unknown. Factors thought to increase the risk of Ménière's disease include:

- poor fluid drainage in your inner ear
- an immune system disorder
- allergies
- a viral infection, such as meningitis
- a family history of Ménière's disease
- a head injury
- migraines

What are the treatments for Ménière's disease?

There's no cure for Ménière's disease, but treatment can help to reduce and control the symptoms. Treatments include:

Medication

Your doctor may prescribe you some medication to try to ease your symptoms.

Diet and lifestyle changes

There is limited evidence that changes to your diet can help, but some people feel their symptoms improve if they:

- eat a low salt diet
- avoid alcohol and caffeine
- stop smoking

Vestibular rehabilitation

Vestibular rehabilitation (an exercise-based treatment programme for dizziness) may be useful if you experience balance problems or dizziness between episodes, or in the later stages of the disease.

Hearing aids

Hearing aids may be useful in cases of permanent hearing loss. Wearing a hearing aid can also help reduce tinnitus if you have hearing loss.

Tinnitus counselling

We may refer you to a tinnitus specialist to help you manage your tinnitus.

Relaxation techniques

Meditation and mindfulness (an awareness of ourselves and the world around us) can help to improve your mental wellbeing and reduce stress.

Surgery

In rare cases, surgery may be an option for severe symptoms where other treatments have failed.

Living with Ménière's disease

Living with Ménière's disease can be distressing due to its unpredictable nature. Please see your GP if you are struggling to cope with Ménière's disease. They will be able to guide you to support, such as counselling (cognitive behavioural therapy) and relaxation therapy.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

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Brintons Terrace
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 0YG

Telephone: **023 8120 2997**

Email: rshaudiology@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

Ménière's society

Ménière's society is a charity dedicated to supporting individuals with vestibular disorders such as Ménière's disease. They offer a great support network for people with Ménière's disease, their families and carers.

Website: www.menieres.org.uk

Helpline: **01306 876 883**

NHS

Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menieres-disease

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Useful apps

Calm

Calm is a meditation app designed to help reduce stress, and improve sleep and relaxation.

Headspace

Headspace teaches meditation and mindfulness to help reduce stress, and improve focus and sleep.

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