

Patient information factsheet

Vestibular migraine

We have written this factsheet to give you more information about vestibular migraines. It explains what a vestibular migraine is, what causes a migraine 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 a vestibular migraine?

A vestibular migraine, or migrainous vertigo, is a type of migraine that mainly presents with dizziness symptoms. Approximately 40% of people who experience migraines have problems with dizziness and/or balance at some point. This can be before, during, after, or independent of the migraine.

The most common symptoms of a migraine include:

- an intense headache
- nausea (feeling sick)
- vomiting (being sick)
- vertigo (sensation of movement) or dizziness

You may also experience sensitivity to sound and/or light, and visual problems. Occasionally dizziness may be the only symptom of a migraine. The duration of migraines varies per person, but usually lasts minutes to hours. It is common to feel tired for up to three days after a migraine. However, some people may feel dizzy for a little while longer (symptoms usually become milder as time goes on).

What causes migraines?

The exact cause of migraines is unknown. However, there is evidence to show that migraines are closely related to anxiety and depression, and the most common cause is stress. Research has also shown that migraines tend to run in families and women are more likely to have migraines due to hormonal changes.

There are many factors that can trigger a migraine. Triggers may include hormonal changes, certain foods and even changes in the weather. Some people are able to identify their triggers, and try to avoid them to prevent a migraine. Control of migraine triggers has been shown to help 80 to 90% of sufferers.

What are the common triggers of migraines?

Physical and emotional triggers

- Stress or anxiety
- Tiredness, lack of sleep or irregular sleep
- Hormones
- Eye strain
- Dental problems (teeth grinding)
- Tension in the neck or shoulders

Dietary triggers

- Lack of food or irregular meals
- Dehydration
- Alcohol
- Caffeine
- Certain foods, such as chocolate, cheese and citrus fruits (please refer to our additional dietary trigger sheet for more information)
- Food additives (monosodium glutamate, aspartame, tyramine or nitrates)

Environmental triggers

- Bright lights, glare and flicker
- Loud noises
- Strong smells
- Smoky environments or smoking

Some sleeping tablets can also trigger a migraine. For more information on triggers, please ask a member of staff or visit the vestibular migraine website: www.vestibularmigraine.co.uk

What are the treatment options for vestibular migraines?

Prevention

If you are able to identify particular factors that trigger your migraines, you may be able to avoid them and prevent your migraines from occurring. You may find it useful to keep a food diary to record what you eat and the symptoms you experience each day. Please see the example food diary on the next page.

Your doctor may prescribe you medication to prevent migraines. This includes medications such as antidepressants, beta blockers and anti-epileptic medication.

Medication

- Headaches
Some people take pain relief medications, such as paracetamol, aspirin and ibuprofen. If these do not relieve your symptoms, your GP may prescribe you a pain relief medication designed specifically for migraines. It is important to avoid taking pain relief medication for more than two days per week.
- Dizziness
Your doctor may prescribe you anti-sickness medication to help with nausea and vomiting. This medication will also help you absorb pain relief medications faster.

Look after your physical and mental wellbeing

It is important to maintain a healthy, balanced diet and live an active lifestyle. Eating well and exercising can help improve your symptoms.

Meditation and mindfulness (an awareness of ourselves and the world around us) can help relieve stress and reduce the effects of your symptoms on your mental wellbeing.

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Example food diary

Date			
How are you feeling (morning)?	Dizziness	Imbalance	Headache
Breakfast			
Lunch			
Dinner			
Snacks and drinks			
How are you feeling (evening)?	Dizziness	Imbalance	Headache
Comments or other symptoms			

It may be worth noting any other relevant information about the day in the comments section, as it may help you to find your trigger. For example:

- any hormonal changes
- how much sleep you had
- how much water you drank
- any stress you experienced

Contact us

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

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Useful links

Vestibular migraine

This website provides further information on vestibular migraines and an extensive list of potential triggers. It also provides more example trigger diaries and information on where to find further support.

Website: www.vestibularmigraine.co.uk

Ménière's Society

The Ménière's Society website contains some useful information about vestibular migraines.

Website: www.menieres.org.uk/information-and-support/symptoms-and-conditions/migraine-associated-vertigo

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Useful apps

Migraine buddy

Migraine buddy is an app which is useful for tracking your migraines and identifying your migraine triggers.

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.

iPrescribe Exercise

iPrescribe Exercises provides users with a free 12 week personalised exercise programme.

OurPath

OurPath is an online health coach and support group to help you eat well, stay active and motivate you (from £30 a month).

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