



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Ménière's disease

ENT Department

Patient information

## What is Ménière's disease?

Ménière's disease is a disorder that affects the labyrinth (a system of passages) of your inner ear, which is important for hearing and balance. About 1 in 1000 people have Ménière's disease and it may affect an equal number of men and women. It may develop at any age, but it is most common in people between 20 and 60 years old.

## What causes Ménière's disease?

The exact cause of Ménière's disease is unknown, but it's thought to be caused by a problem with pressure deep inside the ear.

Factors that can increase your risk of developing Ménière's disease include a family history of the condition and a chemical imbalance in the fluid in your inner ear.

## Lifestyle changes to help manage Ménière's disease

This information offers some suggestions with the aim of reducing the number of episodes of dizziness that you are currently experiencing, by preventing fluctuations in the pressure of the inner ear fluids. It generally takes a few weeks before you may notice any benefit.

1. Distribute your food and fluid intake evenly throughout the day and from day to day. Eat approximately the same amount of food at each meal and do not skip meals. If you eat snacks, have them at regular times.
2. Avoid eating foods or fluids which have a high salt content. High salt intake results in fluctuations in the inner ear fluid pressure and may increase your symptoms. Aim for a diet high

in fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and low in canned or processed foods. A 1 to 2 gram sodium intake diet is usually what is recommended. One teaspoon of table salt has about 2 grams of sodium. Note that sodium (one of the two elements in table salt) is not exactly the same as sodium chloride (salt). The following are some examples of natural foods that are high in sodium.

- Celery
  - Shrimp
  - Spinach
  - Whelks
  - Kelp
  - Pickled foods such as olives
  - Swiss chard
  - Smoked fish
  - Oysters
  - Smoked cheese
3. Drink adequate amounts of fluid daily. This should include water and low-sugar fruit juices (for example cranberry). Try to anticipate fluid loss which will occur with exercise or heat, and replace these fluids before they are lost.
  4. Avoid food and drinks which contain caffeine (such as coffee, tea, cola drinks and chocolate). Caffeine has stimulant properties that may make your symptoms worse.
  5. Limit your alcohol intake to one glass of beer or wine each day.
  6. Where possible, limit the amount of stress in your life.
  7. Avoid smoking or chewing nicotine products.

# Where can I get further information?

## Ménière's Society

Telephone **01306 876883**

[www.meandve.org.uk](http://www.meandve.org.uk)

## Brain and Spine Foundation

Telephone **0808 8081000**

[www.brainandspine.org.uk](http://www.brainandspine.org.uk)

# Who can I contact with any concerns or questions?

If you have any problems or are worried, please do not hesitate to contact us in the Ear, Nose and Throat Outpatient Department.

## Royal Sussex County Hospital

ENT Department **01273 696955 Ext. 64813**

## Worthing Hospital

ENT Department **01903 205111 Ext. 84067**

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This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in St Richard's Hospital and Worthing Hospital.

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