



Meniere's Disease / Endolymphatic Hydrops Information and Dietary Restrictions

The fluid-filled hearing and balance structures of the inner ear normally function independent of the body's overall fluid/blood system. In a normal inner ear, the fluid is maintained at a constant volume and contains specific concentrations of sodium, potassium, chloride, and other electrolytes. This fluid bathes the sensory cells of the inner ear and allows them to function normally.

With injury or degeneration of the inner ear structures, independent control is lost and the volume and concentration of the inner ear fluid fluctuate with changes in the body's fluid/blood. This fluctuation causes the following symptoms: pressure or fullness in the ears; roaring tinnitus (noises in the ears); fluctuating low frequency hearing loss that eventually becomes permanent; and episodic vertigo. This disease process is known as Meniere's Disease or Endolymphatic Hydrops.

How does what I eat affect my dizziness?

Your inner ear fluid is influenced by certain substances in your blood and other bodily fluids. For example, eating foods that are high in salt or sugar increase your blood-level concentration of salt or sugar and therefore affect the concentration of those substances in your inner ear.

People with Meniere's disease should control the amount of salt and sugar that is added to their food. Limiting or eliminating your use of caffeine and alcohol should also help to reduce symptoms of dizziness and ringing in the ears in patient's suffering from Meniere's Disease.

Dietary goals: The goal of treatment is to provide stable bodily fluid/blood levels in order to avoid secondary fluctuations in the inner ear.

1. **Distribute your food and fluid intake evenly.** 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 having foods or fluids that are high in salt, sodium, or MSG (monosodium glutamate).** High salt intake results in fluctuations in the inner ear fluid pressure and may worsen your symptoms. Aim for a diet composed of fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Limit canned, frozen, and/or processed foods. A 1-gram sodium intake diet is the standard recommendation.
3. **Drink adequate amounts of fluid daily.** This should include water, milk, and low-sugar fruit juices. Try to anticipate fluid loss (usually occurring with exercise or heat) and replace these fluids before they are lost.
4. **Avoid fluids and foods that contain caffeine.** Caffeine has stimulant properties that may worsen your symptoms. In some cases, large amounts of caffeine may trigger migraine, which can be difficult to distinguish from Meniere's Disease.
5. **Limit alcohol intake to one glass of beer or wine each day.**



Drug Considerations

1. **Avoid aspirin and medications that contain aspirin.** Aspirin can cause tinnitus (noises in the ear). Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents such as ibuprofen or naproxen should also be avoided when practical.
2. **Avoid caffeine-containing medications.** Caffeine can increase tinnitus and/or worsen your symptoms.
3. **Pay attention to the content of all over-the-counter medications as well as drugs prescribed by your physicians.** .
4. **Avoid cigarettes and other forms of nicotine.** Nicotine constricts blood vessels and can decrease the blood supply to the inner ear thereby making your symptoms worse.

Where can I get additional help in modifying my diet?

Dietitians can help you establish a nutritional program that meets your needs and goals. With their assistance, you'll find that modifying your eating habits may help control or lessen your symptoms.

Helpful websites and other information:

Meniere's Disease Support Group

<http://www.dailystrength.org/c/Menieres-Disease/support-group>

<http://www.menieres.org/>

International Hearing Foundation

<http://www.internationalhearingfoundation.org/menieres-tinnitus.html>

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<http://www.tchain.com/otoneurology/disorders/menieres/menieres.html>