



Ménière's disease (page 1 of 2)

What is Ménière's disease?

Ménière's disease is a condition of the inner ear affecting balance and hearing. It is thought to be caused by unusually large amounts of a fluid called endolymph creating a buildup of pressure in the inner ear.

This pressure can cause the inner ear to send abnormal messages to the brain resulting in dizziness, vomiting and dulled hearing. The exact cause of Ménière's disease is not known but there may be links to circulation problems, viral infections, allergies, the immune system, migraines, or genetic factors.

How can it be managed?

There are a number of ways of treating Ménière's disease:

Medication/diet

Your GP or ENT specialist might prescribe medication to help make attacks less severe and occur less often. This might be medication for your balance or medication to reduce water retention (diuretic). Your doctor might suggest that you reduce the amount of salt in your diet because it is thought that doing so may reduce the amount of endolymph produced.

Special balance exercises

Special balance (vestibular) exercises may be suggested if you have any dizziness or imbalance in-between the Ménière's attacks.

What can you do about tinnitus?

Ménière's disease causes damage to the hair cell receptors in the inner ear. These damaged hair cells spontaneously fire and send disorganised signals up the auditory nerve to the brain. In Ménière's the hair cells concerned with low frequency sound are the first damaged, and therefore the tinnitus in Ménière's is usually a rumbling, low frequency noise.

You might be referred to a specialist tinnitus clinic for more help and advice if you have tinnitus between attacks.

Support Groups

The Ménière's Society website (www.menieres.org.uk) has a list of support groups. The ones nearest to Salisbury are: Basingstoke, Winchester, Swindon and The Solent Hampshire.

For more information please email: info@menieres.org.uk or look at the website.

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

Name: Zoe Townend
Role: Chief Audiologist
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Driving

There are legal obligations which apply to those who suffer from, or develop, sudden attacks of unprovoked or unprecipitated disabling giddiness, (such as Ménière's disease or labyrinthine disorder) and wish to continue driving. You are required by law to inform the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), as well as the company which insures any vehicle you drive of your condition. Visit the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website for more information.

Providing your condition does not give rise to 'sudden and disabling attacks of vertigo' and you comply with the law by notifying the DVLA and your insurer, then only limited changes are likely to occur to affect your driving.