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## MENIERE'S SYNDROME

### What causes Meniere's syndrome?

Meniere's (say "men-ears") syndrome is a problem of the inner ear. For an unknown reason, excess salt water builds up in the canals of the inner ear. This pressure can result in membrane damage that causes vertigo, low pitched tinnitus and a fluctuating hearing loss. Meniere's disease is not something that is contagious or fatal. However, it is a "chronic" problem, which means that it lasts a long time. People with Meniere's disease do not have symptoms all of the time. When the symptoms occur, it is called an "attack". Attacks may happen often, or rarely. Attacks usually last from 30 minutes to 24 hours. The evaluation may include a hearing test, balance test, or ECOG ( a test of cochlear nerve function).

### What are the symptoms during an attack?

The symptoms of Meniere's syndrome include dizziness, a feeling of fullness in the ear and tinnitus (a roaring, low pitched sound in the ear). The dizziness is described as a spinning or whirling feeling. This may cause problems with the balance (feeling unstable while walking). You may also have nausea and vomiting. Some people also notice some hearing loss, especially with the sounds that have a lower tone.

### What is the treatment for Meniere's syndrome?

Your doctor may recommend changing your diet to help control the attacks. Since the disease is a result of a problem with salt in the canals of the inner ear, you have to limit your salt intake to less than 2000mg of salt (sodium) per day. Lowering the level of salt in your body lowers the amount of salty fluid in the inner ear canals. A medicine called a diuretic (water pill) may also help. You should limit the amount of caffeine and alcohol in your diet and quit smoking, if you smoke. Lowering stress in your life also helps. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to help with feelings of dizziness and nausea. These medicines may cause you to feel sleepy. You should try to avoid driving a car or operating machinery on these medications. In difficult cases of Meniere's disease (rarely when attacks cannot be controlled by diet or medication), surgery may be necessary.

### What should I do during an attack?

During an attack, you should try to lie flat on a surface that does not move, such as the floor or bed. To cope with the dizziness, keep your eyes aimed at an object that does not move. Do not eat or drink much, so you will be less likely to vomit. When the symptoms improve, get up slowly avoiding rapid head movements. If you keep vomiting for several hours and cannot keep down any liquids, call your doctor for medicine to help control the vomiting. When your doctor is notified of hearing loss or dizziness, it can be decided if you need to be evaluated at that time. If you are dizzy, you should not drive, work heights, operate heavy machinery or put yourself in a situation where you could hurt yourself or others while you are dizzy. Avoid salt, caffeine and alcohol.