



[This page prints out on 4 sheets]

## Meniere's Disease

Read this page to find out what Meniere's Disease is.

### What is Meniere's disease?

**Meniere's disease (men-YEERS)** is a disease of the inner ear. Meniere's disease causes 4 kinds of problems:

- Hearing loss
- Dizziness that feels like the room is spinning. This is called **vertigo**.
- Ringing in the ear. This is called **tinnitus**.
- Feeling like there's pressure in your ears. This is called **aural fullness**.

Often, 2 or more of these problems happen at the same time. This is called a **Meniere's attack**.

If your child has a Meniere's attack, she might hear ringing in her ear. Then she might become dizzy.

Meniere's attacks can last for just a few minutes. Or they can last for a few hours. Afterwards, your child may feel unsteady or sick for a few days.

### Meniere's disease usually affects only 1 ear

Meniere's disease usually only affects 1 ear. So people with Meniere's disease often [lose their hearing in one ear](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/hearingloss/types/unilateral.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/hearingloss/types/unilateral.jsp>). They may also have ringing and pressure in that ear. But Meniere's disease can affect both ears in some people.

### Children don't usually get Meniere's disease

Children do not usually get Meniere's disease, but they can. Meniere's disease usually starts around age 30 or 40.

### What causes Meniere's disease?

Doctors don't know what causes Meniere's disease. Sometimes doctors describe Meniere's disease as **idiopathic** or **sporadic**. These words mean that doctors don't know what causes it, and they can't tell when or why it happens.

Sometimes Meniere's disease runs in families. So if your child has Meniere's disease, you might have a relative who has the same problem.

## **Signs of Meniere's Disease**

### **Hearing loss**

At first, Meniere's disease can cause hearing loss that comes and goes. Later on, the hearing loss may [get worse over time](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/hearingloss/types/progressive/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/hearingloss/types/progressive/>), and becomes permanent.

#### Hearing loss in early stages:

- During an attack, someone may have a sudden hearing loss.
- Hearing loss may occur with vertigo, tinnitus, or aural fullness during an attack.
- The hearing loss is usually in the low frequencies, and can range from mild to severe.
- Speech often sounds distorted or muffled in the affected ear.
- The hearing often goes back to normal after the attack, in a few hours or in a few days. This is called **fluctuating hearing loss**.

#### Hearing loss later on:

- The hearing loss may not go back to normal after an attack.
- The hearing loss may become [progressive](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/hearingloss/types/progressive/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/hearingloss/types/progressive/>), sometimes to severe or even profound levels, even if the other symptoms go away.
- Speech may continue to sound distorted or muffled.
- A person may begin to have symptoms in the ear that was normal before.

### **Vertigo - when you feel like the room is spinning around**

Vertigo is a kind of dizziness that may last several minutes or hours. Vertigo comes in spells.

- Mild spells - your child might feel a little unsteady on her feet.
- Bad spells - your child might not be able to stand up. Bad spells of vertigo can make your child feel sick and throw up.

Sometimes just turning the head makes the vertigo worse. This makes sports, driving and just moving around much harder.

Sometimes, people with vertigo have trouble telling where different directions are. They might not know which way is up and which is down.

People with Meniere's disease often say that vertigo is the hardest part of the disease to cope with. But no matter how bad a spell of vertigo is, it eventually goes away.

### **Tinnitus - ringing in the ears**

People with tinnitus hear sounds in their ear that other people cannot hear. Tinnitus sounds different to different people. Some people say it sounds like a hum or buzz. Other people say it sounds like roaring.

Some people with Meniere's get tinnitus right before they get a spell of vertigo. Tinnitus doesn't hurt, but it can be very annoying. It can make children act upset.

### **Aural fullness - when you feel like your ears should pop**

A person with aural fullness feels like his ear has to "pop." Like when you go down an elevator too fast, or when you take off and land in an airplane.

Most people can chew gum or yawn to make their ears pop when they have to. But doing those things won't help with Meniere's disease.

- People with Meniere's disease may or may not have this symptom.
- People with Meniere's disease often say that aural fullness is the easiest part of the disease to cope with.

### **How to find out if your child has Meniere's disease**

If you think your child could have Meniere's disease, write down some notes about the signs that you see. Take your child to the doctor, and bring your notes! The doctor may ask you about the signs, and then run some tests on your child. The tests include:

- hearing tests, like ABR and OAE
- tympanometry
- electronystagmography (ENG) to test balance
- posturography, another test of balance

It is especially helpful to have these tests done while the person is having a Meniere's attack.

### **How you can help your child**

Certain things cause some people with Meniere's disease to have a Meniere's attack. These things are called **triggers**. Some common triggers are:

- stress
- salty foods, like cheese, pizza, and soy sauce. Ask your doctor for a list of foods to avoid.
- alcohol
- caffeine. Things that have caffeine are coffee, tea and soda.
- allergies
- sugar
- being pregnant
- looking at parallel lines

### **Help your child deal with the tinnitus**

You can't usually cure tinnitus. But there are things you can do to help:

- Put on some music or static on a radio station. This can help take your child's mind off the tinnitus.
- A hearing aid can be helpful for hearing loss and tinnitus.
- If nothing else works, have your child try a special hearing aid called a **tinnitus masker**.

### **Help your child with the hearing loss**

The hearing loss that comes with Meniere's disease can be treated the same way as most other hearing loss. Depending on the amount of hearing loss, [hearing aids](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/hearingaids/>) or a [cochlear implant](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ci/) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/help/tech/ci/>) might help.

### **Have your child try things that make the symptoms less bad.**

Have your child exercise. Exercising often can also help with all 4 symptoms.

If the symptoms of Meniere's disease do not get better with diet, or go away by themselves, ask your doctor about medicine or surgery that can help your child. Medicines and surgery can help the dizziness, but not the hearing loss or tinnitus.

### **Learn more about Meniere's disease**

Check out these websites to find out more about Meniere's disease:

- [Meniere's Disease Information Center](http://www.menieresinfo.com/) (<http://www.menieresinfo.com/>)
- [The Meniere's Disease Website](http://www.menieresinfo.org/) ([http://www.menieresinfo.org](http://www.menieresinfo.org/))

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You can find this page online at:

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