

FACT SHEET



Migraine Associated Dizziness

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What is Migraine Associated Dizziness?

Many people are familiar with a migraine – a headache that makes the person sensitive to light and noise. Researchers think migraines are due to a rapid decrease in blood flow to the brain that changes the nerve activity in that region. Sometimes a migraine happens in the area of the brain called *the vestibular system*. This can cause dizziness, motion sickness, or unsteadiness. The brain then becomes very sensitive to light, sound, and visual motion (looking at people or objects moving around). Migraine associated dizziness can happen before, during, or after a headache, or even without a headache at all. Symptoms may last between a few hours to days.

Why do I get Migraines?

People who have migraines often have family members with a history of migraines, so there may be a genetic cause. Attacks may be brought on by specific triggers. Common triggers are stress, certain foods, smoking, low blood sugar, or hormonal changes.

What is the Treatment for Migraine Associated Dizziness?

Finding out what triggers an attack and stopping the trigger is the first goal of treatment. Keeping a diet log and avoiding common food triggers (such as caffeine, chocolate, cheese, wine and foods with MSG) is effective for many people. It is important to drink plenty of water. Exercise to reduce stress is commonly recommended. Biofeedback or other stress reduction techniques may be useful if exercise is not possible. Women taking oral estrogen supplements should talk to their doctor about other treatment options. Medications are available that may prevent a migraine or reduce symptoms after they start.

How does Physical Therapy Help Migraine Associated Dizziness?

After migraine attacks are better controlled, a physical therapist specializing in vestibular treatment may help improve unsteadiness. Therapists use exercises designed to increase balance control. The goal of therapy is to become less



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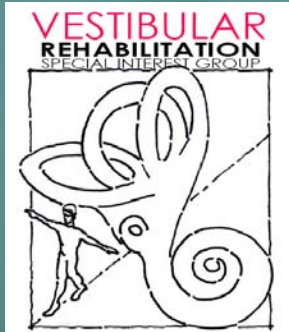
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sensitive to activities that provoke dizziness, nausea, or unsteadiness. The therapist will evaluate the patient and design a specific program of exercises to increase tolerance to movement and situations that are uncomfortable. Exercises are progressed so that at the end of treatment the patient is able to tolerate normal or near normal amounts of light, sounds, and activity around them. The therapist will also test balance and teach exercises to help the person improve their sense of steadiness in their home and community.

What is the Prognosis for a Cure?

Prognosis varies from person to person. A combination of the right medicine and an exercise program can often provide the best chance for recovery.

Other Sources for Information:

VEDA (Vestibular Disorders Association), <http://www.vestibular.org>

<http://www.american-hearing.org/disorders/central/migraine/mav.html>

<http://www.dizziness-and-balance.com>

<http://emedicine.medscape.com/article/884136-overview>

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/20021201/2123.html>



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