

OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Dr. Michiel Rorick

What Is Ménière's Disease?

Ménière's disease is a disorder of the inner ear, characterized by vertigo or dizziness, inner ear pressure, low-frequency hearing loss, tinnitus and nausea.

Because attacks of vertigo appear suddenly, without warning, the syndrome can be unnerving. Episodes may last from a few hours to 24 hours, and are completely debilitating, leaving sufferers unable to work, drive or even walk normally. Hearing in the affected ear tends to fluctuate and eventually worsens. Currently, there is no cure.

The good news in all this? Research shows that chiropractic care is an effective, all-natural strategy for alleviating Ménière's disease. Dr. Rorick wants patients to know about this exciting research.

What Causes Ménière's Disease?

The cause isn't well understood. The culprit may be abnormal fluid volume in the inner ear, but the factors that actually cause this change are unknown.

Who Gets It?

Anyone can get Ménière's disease — children to seniors; however, those in their 40s and 50s are primarily affected.

What Role Might the Spine Play?

Let's start with a little neck vertebrae 101. Dr. Rorick explains to patients that the upper spinal bones (vertebrae) of the neck are called cervical vertebrae. The two cervical vertebrae lying directly beneath the skull are known as C1 and C2. These bones are chiefly responsible for rotation and flexibility of the head and neck.

If these vertebrae become even slightly displaced or their motion restricted, vertigo may ensue. Why? Many nerves transmit through the upper cervical spine to and from the brain. Dysfunction in this region may disturb the natural flow of nerve impulses. This may trigger multiple

problems throughout the body. Unless the neck misalignment is addressed, symptoms — such as vertigo — persist.

Misalignment Without Injury?

Yes, C1 and C2 can become misaligned in the absence of injury. These two vertebrae have a challenging day job. The head relies on these bones to move and support its weight, which can equal that of a light bowling ball! That's a daunting task, especially considering C1 and C2 only weigh a few ounces.

How Does Chiropractic Help?

Chiropractic care focuses on correcting *vertebral subluxations*, dysfunctional segments in the spine and neck. It's a condition that occurs when vertebrae are out of place or not functioning properly. Through *chiropractic adjustments*, maneuvers specially designed to restore motion and correct misaligned vertebrae, doctors of chiropractic, such as Dr. Rorick, correct vertebral subluxations.

And the great news: Realigning vertebrae, especially C1 and C2, may reduce or eliminate vertigo.

It's All Connected

Just how connected are misalignments in the cervical vertebrae to symptoms related to Ménière's disease, such as vertigo, tinnitus, ear pressure and hearing loss? They may be very much related, say researchers.

In a study of 259 patients with "well-defined" upper cervical subluxations and vertigo, 15 percent suffered significant hearing loss. And a substantial 40 percent experienced loss of hearing in lower frequencies. Of the group, 62 underwent chiropractic care and enjoyed dramatic improvements. "Results indicate that these hearing disorders are reversible... The therapy of choice is chiropractic manipulation of the upper cervical spine," conclude the authors (*HNO* 1994;42:604-13).

Get Your Head on Straight

No pun intended: Research shows that chiropractic can help you get your head on straight — literally.

In one report, a 75-year-old woman with a history of vertigo, tinnitus and hearing loss sought chiropractic care. Five weeks before initiating care, her symptoms had progressively intensified.



The Ear

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Researchers noted “significant decreases” in hearing and misalignment in the upper cervical spine. “Through the course of [upper cervical-specific chiropractic] care, the patient’s symptoms were alleviated, structural and functional improvements were evident through radiographic examination, and audiologic function improved.”

The conclusion was that “the clinical progress documented in this report suggests that upper cervical manipulation may benefit patients who have tinnitus and hearing loss.” (*J Manipulative Physiol Ther* 2000;23:352-62.)

TMJ

Research indicates that Ménière’s disease has a clear association with dysfunction of the temporomandibular joint (TMJ). TMJ is the joint between the head of the lower jawbone and the temporal bone.

Patients with TMJ disorders are likely to suffer from tinnitus and vertigo, muscular tension in the jaw and neck, as well as pain in the face, temples or jaw. One study found that “many of such patients had also symptoms of cervical spine disorders, head, neck and shoulder pain, and limitations in side bending and rotation were also frequent complaints. One-third of these patients could influence tinnitus by jaw movements and 75 percent could trigger vertigo by head or neck movements.” (*Prog Brain Res* 2007;166:215-9.)

Fortunately, chiropractic care is a tried and true method for eliminating TMJ disorders.

Other All-Natural Solutions

In addition to chiropractic care, here are some other all-natural remedies.

Slash Stress

Emotional stress is strongly tied to Ménière’s disease. When 110 Ménière’s patients completed multiple anxiety and stress profiles, all subjects demonstrated more daily stressors; employed fewer coping strategies; suffered from increased anxiety and

depression; and had a worse quality of life, compared to healthy reference groups (*Int J Audiol* 2006;45:496-502).

Reduce Salt Intake

Excess sodium increases fluid retention. Limiting salt consumption may help, based on the theory that Ménière’s disease symptoms may result from excess fluid in the inner ear. Read product labels to determine salt content and avoid any foods with MSG (monosodium glutamate).

Avoid Alcohol, Caffeine and Nicotine

Patients report that eliminating alcohol, caffeine and nicotine can do wonders to reduce symptoms.

Exercise

In addition to reducing stress, exercise improves balance, circulation, blood flow and muscle strength. Exercises that bolster coordination, such as walking or running, are very beneficial for Ménière’s sufferers.

Start slowly with exercises to improve vertigo. Begin by maintaining balance while standing still. Then, move on to exercises that improve balance while swaying, turning and walking. Neck and head exercises will boost sense of balance and improve vertigo.

Hydration

Drinking an adequate amount of water may alleviate two key symptoms of Ménière’s disease: vertigo and hearing. In a two-year study, 18 Ménière’s disease patients drank 35 mL/kg of water per day, while 29 Ménière’s sufferers consumed a conventional amount of fluids and took a diuretic (drug to increase urine excretion).

Individuals in the water group enjoyed “dramatically relieved vertigo and significantly improved ... hearing,” compared to controls. “Deliberate modulation of the intake of water may be the simplest and most cost-effective medical treatment for patients with Ménière’s disease.” (*Laryngoscope* 2006;116:1455-60.)

Antioxidants

Antioxidants fight off the destructive effects of cell-damaging “free radicals” (unstable and highly reactive atoms or group of atoms).

Research indicates that patients with Ménière’s disease may have “a high concentration of free radicals and low natural defenses (e.g., antioxidant plasmatic capacity).” In the study, patients with tinnitus were divided into three groups: control, conventional therapy and antioxidant treatment, “and those in the antioxidant treatment group, especially those with Ménière’s syndrome, demonstrated a net and more significant improvement.” (*Int Tinnitus J* 2003;9:104-8.)



In another study, 25 patients took one of three free-radical scavengers: rebamipide (300 mg/day), vitamin C (600 mg/day) and/or glutathione (300 mg/day) for eight weeks.

“Of 22 patients, 21 showed marked improvement of vertigo; 12/27 ears showed improvement of hearing disorders; 17/27 ears showed improvement of tinnitus; and 18/25 patients showed improvement of disability. This study suggests that treatment using radical scavengers has the potential to become an effective new therapy for MD.” (*Acta Otolaryngol* 2003;123:697-703.)

Remember to never start any supplementation program without first consulting your doctor of chiropractic.

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