



## Vestibular Migraines

### What are Vestibular Migraines?

Vestibular Migraine is a type of migraine that can cause balance disturbances as well as sound and visual changes. vestibular migraine may or may not be associated with headache. It is the second most common cause of vertigo.

### What causes Vestibular Migraines?

This is not completely understood but is thought to be caused by abnormal “electric messages” in the brain leading to dilation (widening) of the blood vessels.

They are more common in women, patients who have a history of headache migraines and people with a family history of migraines.

### What symptoms can you have?

Episodes of dizziness or imbalance that usually last for minutes, days or even weeks.

- Vertigo or spinning sensation and or dizziness or imbalance
- Symptoms made worse by head movement (bending over, sitting up etc.)
- Noise and or light sensitivity. Often people with vestibular migraines struggle in brightly lit areas such a shopping centres.
- Visual changes. Bright flickering or flashing lights
- Nausea and or vomiting
- Ringing in the ear (tinnitus)
- Pressure or blocked feeling in the ear

### How is a diagnosis made?

Diagnosis is usually based mainly on history and physical examination. During the COVID 19 crisis and telehealth consultations physical examination will be limited. There are no X-Rays or blood tests to diagnose vestibular migraines.

### How are Vestibular Migraines treated?

As for migraines causing headache, lifestyle factors can reduce the number and severity of migraines this includes:

- 1) Reducing stress and anxiety
- 2) Getting enough sleep
- 3) Regular exercise
- 4) Avoiding alcohol
- 5) Drinking lots of water
- 6) Avoiding food or drinks that trigger migraines: caffeine, alcohol, aged cheese, foods containing large amounts of monosodium glutamate (MSG), processed meats.

There are medications you can take both to prevent vestibular migraines and to treat an episode or attack. The medications used to treat vestibular migraines are the same treatment as other migraine medication.

You may also benefit from vestibular rehabilitation or physiotherapy.

### More information on Vestibular Migraines:

Vestibular Disorders Association (USA)

[www.vestibular.org](http://www.vestibular.org)

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