

MIGRAINE RELATED DIZZINESS (VERTEBROBASILAR MIGRAINE)

What is Migraine?

Migraines are typically severe headaches that are preceded or accompanied by warning symptoms such as flashing lights, blind spots in vision, tingling or numbness in the limbs. The headaches are usually one sided and throbbing in nature. Migraines are thought to be due to an abnormal engorgement of blood vessels in the brain as well as a chemical disturbance in the nerves that supply these arteries.

What is Migraine related dizziness?

Migraine related dizziness is thought to be due to a migraine like disturbance of the blood supply to the balance part of the brain. The migraine headache is often part of the disease, along with dizziness manifesting as combinations of the following:

- True sensation of spinning (vertigo)
- Lightheadedness
- Foggy feeling in the head
- Imbalance (like you are on a boat)
- Hearing loss/ Ringing in the ears/ Ear pressure

Who gets Migraine related dizziness?

According to ABS 2001 data approximately 3 million Australians suffer migraine headaches (approx 15%) with the greatest number of people suffering between the age of 12 to 40 (more females than males). About one third of migraine sufferers get dizzy symptoms (ie 5% of the population). A family history is often present.

How do I treat Migraine related dizziness?

Preventative Measures - Diet

The following diet elimination should be attempted for at least one month, to determine if food is contributing. If successful in eliminating headaches then each individual food stuff is reintroduced to work out the culprit. Try avoiding:

- Alcohol (Redwine, fortified wines, scotch, whisky, bourbon)
- Aged Cheeses (including parmesan and cheddar)
- Chocolate
- Salt and Caffeine loading can often worsen dizziness
- MSG (often found in takeaway meals including chinese takeaway)

Medical Treatments

Some medicines such as Verapamil, Endep or Sandomigran are prescribed to reduce the attacks if the imbalance is persistent or regular over a long period.

Balance exercises such as the Cawthorne Balance exercises may help.

Further investigations

A hearing and balance test as well as an MRI of the brain are often recommended by your ENT surgeon, largely to help with diagnosis and exclude other serious causes of dizziness.

