



Vestibular migraine

QUICK FACTS

One in 10 people in the UK are affected by migraine.

- One in 100 people are affected by vestibular migraine in their lifetime.
- People aged 40 to 50 years old are mostly affected.
- More women than men are affected by vestibular migraine.
- Vertigo can also occur without a migraine.

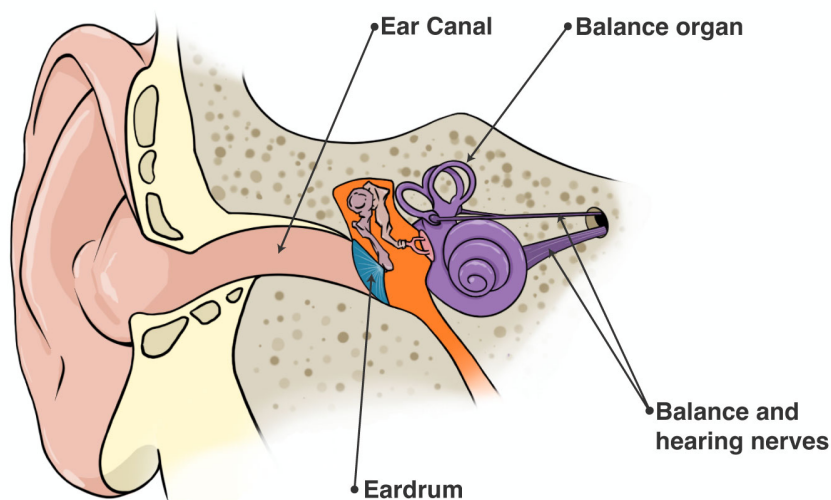
ABOUT THE CONDITION

What is vestibular migraine?

Vestibular migraine is a type of migraine. It happens when signals involved with maintaining balance, hearing and sensing pain get a bit mixed up in the brain.

The balance organ of the inner ear (shaded in purple in Figure 1), would normally tell the brain about the position and direction your head is facing. This gives you a sense of balance. When the balance system is not working as it should do, it can cause symptoms of dizziness.

- Outer Ear
- Middle Ear
- Inner Ear



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Figure 1. Anatomy of the ear

One in 100 people will be affected by vestibular migraine in their lifetime. It can happen at any age, but mostly between the ages of 40 and 50 years old. Women are affected more often than men.

What causes vestibular migraine?

The cause of vestibular migraine is complicated and is not fully understood. It is thought that migraine sufferers are more sensitive to triggers, such as light, noise or stress. This leads to the signals being sent in a disordered way. This gives you the symptoms of vestibular migraine.

Migraine conditions may run in families. This suggests that some people are more likely than others to develop the condition.

How is vestibular migraine diagnosed?

There is no specific test to diagnose vestibular migraine. The condition is diagnosed from the information you give about your symptoms and from examinations carried out by your doctor.

Vestibular migraine can cause a range of different symptoms. Most people will only experience some of the symptoms. How severe symptoms are will vary from person to person.

Dizziness or vertigo

- The most common symptom reported by sufferers of vestibular migraine is vertigo.
- Vertigo is a false sense of motion, for example, a feeling that the room is spinning or feeling you are moving.
- This feeling can be brought on by a sudden change in head position or by seeing a moving object.
- Vertigo can happen suddenly, for no apparent reason.

Migraine

- You may experience a moderate to severe headache.
- Daily activities may make the symptoms worse.
- You may also have an increased sensitivity to light, noise, and certain smells. You may get these symptoms just before, during or after an attack.
- You may experience changes in your vision, numbness, or an unusual sensation in part of your body and speech problems.
- You may feel sick (have nausea) or be sick (vomit) during an attack.

Check the [Facial Pain Leaflet](#) to learn more.

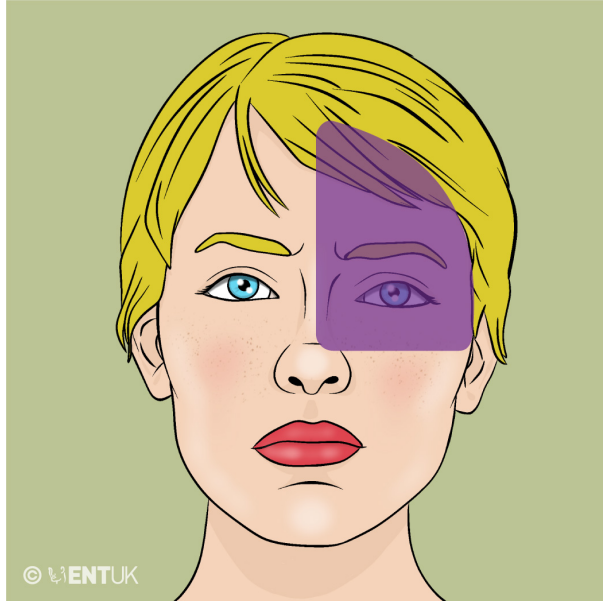


Figure 2. Position of headache in migraine

Hearing

- You may also suffer from hearing loss, [tinnitus](#), and a feeling that your ear is blocked.

How is vestibular migraine treated?

Treatment involves:

- preventing an attack and
- treating an attack when it happens.

Prevention is by far the best way to control this condition. This involves taking medication every day, even when you are not having any symptoms.

You should ask your doctor about the treatment options for you. You should take the **treatment** for an attack as soon as you feel the symptoms are starting. So, it is best to keep your medicine somewhere convenient.

What else can I do to control this condition?

1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle

This includes having a well-balanced diet, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep at night. Staying fit and healthy will help reduce the frequency and severity of attacks.

2. Identify the trigger factor(s)

It is important to try to identify what may trigger an attack. Often vestibular migraine sufferers report that their attacks are brought on by certain foods, activities and can be linked to the menstrual cycle. Once it is known when an attack is most likely to happen, you can plan for it and then manage it more effectively. Where possible, you should try and avoid these triggers.

3. Keep a symptom diary

A diary can help you to keep track of the severity and frequency of attacks. It can also help you identify patterns and see whether your condition is improving or not. A diary can also be helpful for identifying what makes the symptoms better or worse. Make a note of what was happening before an

attack started. Where were you at the time? What were you doing? Had you eaten or drunk anything? Was there a loud noise or bright light? Were you feeling stressed?

Further reading

For further information, please visit the following websites:

- [Vertigo - NHS website](#)
 - [Migraine - NHS website](#)
 - [Migraine.org.uk](#)
 - [The Migraine Trust](#)
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Disclaimer: *This publication is designed for the information of patients. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the information contained may not be comprehensive and patients should not act upon it without seeking professional advice.*

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