

## “CAN I TRAVEL WITH MENIERE’S DISEASE?”

The uncertainty of when an attack may occur is stressful and therefore we are hesitant to travel. As we know, stress and tiredness are two main factors, which may bring on an attack. Travel may be a challenge but don't write it off, even if you just arrange to take a friend and go out for the day. You don't have to go far to enjoy yourself. If you find you enjoy a short trip you can go further afield next time. Take one step at a time and enjoy your trip

- **Be prepared - Plan ahead**
  - Prepare a couple of days before you leave so you are able to rest before you travel (less stress)
  - Plan journey – with enough time between connections whether flight, bus or train connections (less stress)
- **Travel with someone** who understands (if possible)
- **Have rest periods** – whether it's for a short time or the entire day
- Know how to communicate in case of emergency. You could carry a **letter from your doctor** describing symptoms and medication you take
- Should you be delayed or have some dizzy moments **pack extra medication**
- **Food:** If meeting friends or family let them know in advance about your dietary requirements. Prebook restaurants with your dietary needs. Carry in your day pack food (in case)
- Try to **relax** and not worry about having an attack - take deep breaths or go through your own relaxation routine, listen to relaxing music etc
- **Keep your mind occupied**
- If on a business trips, where possible, **finish your business** before you get too tired.

### WALKING

- Build up your confidence if you are starting to get out again.
- Start slowly
- Go for short, circular walks.
- Stay within a comfortable distance of your home
- Walk at your own pace
- Wear comfortable low-heeled footwear
- Carry phone, water and meds
- Some use a walking stick/pole. Folding sticks are available which can be put in a bag/pocket when not in use.

### CAR TRAVEL

- If you are affected by motion sickness, you may wish to keep some of your medication and sealable plastic bags to hand.
- The flicker of strong sunlight through shaded trees, or the ripple of fencing or telegraph poles flashing past can trigger dizziness in some people.

### TRAVELLING BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

- Sit down if you can as keeping your balance when the vehicle starts/stops can be difficult.

- When travelling by bus/coach make sure you get a seat
- Carry your meds and a sealable plastic bag
- If motion bothers you, be careful **getting on and off escalators**; keep your eyes in front.

### **FLYING**

- Most Ménière's sufferers report no difficulty at all with flying
- When you book your flight or purchase your ticket, notify the airline of your Ménière's.
- Check your travel insurance as Ménière's is a pre-existing condition you may well have to pay a higher premium - shop around
- If you're in doubt about a vertigo attack, book an aisle seat; it's away from the view, which could be disorienting, and it's easier to get to the toilets.
- If noise and vibration are likely to trouble you try to book a seat away from the engines.
- Check with the airline about booking a meal to meet your dietary requirements.
- Once in flight keep your fluid intake up. The air in aircraft is very dry because it is air-conditioned and you will dehydrate to some degree. Avoid drinking alcohol in flight. It adds to the risk of dehydration and so increases the physical stress of flying.
- Some people will experience ear pain when flying. This is not Ménière's, the pain is caused by unequal pressure that develops between the air in the middle ear and the air outside the ear.
- Yawning and swallowing activate the muscles that open your eustachian tubes. You can suck on candy or chew gum to help you swallow. Use the Valsalva maneuver during ascent and descent. ... Repeat several times, especially during descent, to equalize the pressure between your ears and the airplane cabin

### **CHANGE IN ALTITUDE**

Some people say air travel or travel up and down hills and mountains affects their symptoms. A feeling of fullness is often present, however, other symptoms may be affected too.

### **TRAVEL BY SEA**

Some people find just thinking about the motion of a boat or ship almost brings on nausea, whereas others very much enjoy sailing.

- Consider the length of the trip and the likely sea conditions.
- Try a short trip first before you arrange a long cruise.
- Once at sea you may find it less disturbing to stay below deck with a book and avoid the visual effect of seeing the horizon appear to move.
- If you suffer from sea-sickness try to keep your fluid levels up by drinking water; vomiting significantly lowers your fluid levels.

## **MOTION SICKNESS**

Motion sickness during travel occurs when the brain receives conflicting signals about movement. Motion sickness is often triggered by turbulence and vibration and made worse by warmth, anxiety and hunger or overeating. The main symptoms are stomach upset, nausea, vomiting, sweating, and dizziness. Motion sickness can be minimised before and during travel by: moderating intake of food, fluids, and alcohol; fixing eyes on a stationary object or on the horizon; lying down and keeping the eyes closed; choosing a seat where motion is felt least; refraining from reading; sitting by an open window or an air vent if possible; choosing a cabin in the middle of a ship close to water level may reduce motion sickness in some people. For severe sufferers of motion sickness, travel sickness medication may be helpful. You should speak with your GP, health professional or pharmacist regarding any medication.

## **TINNITUS AND FLYING**

If you have tinnitus, you may find that flying is the one time when you are usually completely free of tinnitus because of the noise made by the engines and airflow around the plane. If your Eustachian tubes are blocked, your tinnitus may seem temporarily louder. It should return to its usual level when your Eustachian tubes become unblocked. If you have tinnitus and hearing loss, you may find straining to hear makes your tinnitus louder when on a plane. If you normally wear hearing aids, you should keep them on during your flight as removing them may make your tinnitus louder and more noticeable. Being anxious about flying may make your tinnitus worse: basic relaxation exercises during the flight may help. In rare instances, engine noise can make your tinnitus worse. If you are worried about the noise of the engines, book ahead and try and get a seat near the front of the plane, away from the engines. Wearable sound generators can help to reduce any discomfort due to loud sounds.

## **TRAVELLING WITH HEARING AIDS**

- Take a supply of batteries to last for the duration of your travel. If helpful, find out where your nearest service centre will be at your destination and find out where you can obtain batteries should you run out whilst away from home.
- Take a wax cleaner, air puffer or other cleaning tool with you and use regularly.
- Obtain advice before leaving regarding caring for your aid and batteries, if travelling to destinations where the climate is likely to be extreme (hot, cold, humid or dry).
- Consider insuring your aids against theft, loss or damage while travelling.
- Ascertain whether assistive listening devices are available for your use (e.g. hearing loops).
- Some hotel registration cards allow guests to identify if they have any special needs. This might include needing assistance in case of an evacuation, such as requiring notification of a fire alarm if the building does not have visual fire alarms. Volunteer this information, if needed, when checking in so that your needs are considered.

## **GROMMETS AND FLYING**

Flying is less likely to cause discomfort in a child or adult with a grommet in their ear. The grommet allows air in and out of the ear and reduces the stress on the eardrum that is caused by changes in air pressure in the plane.

Check with your GP/health professional for advice and if you have any concerns.

## **FLYING AFTER SURGERY**

- Check with your ENT consultant when it would be safe for you to fly after any kind of ear surgery.
- Cochlear implants
- You should check with your health professional for advice related to your own cochlear implant.

*Reference: Sourced from Meniere's UK org*