

The first sign that I had any vestibular problem was around 1997.

I flew to Hamilton Island and when I got off the plane and for the next two days I experienced disequilibrium where when I walked around I felt like I was on a boat. It was mild and with the flight back to Brisbane this resolved so I dismissed it as nothing at the time. It may have not been a Meniere's issue but if I'd known what the future would hold I would have started following the diet plan and treatments then.

The next episode was not until 2006, I was home in Canberra when a mild attack of vertigo hit me. I didn't know what it was at the time and it scared me so I called my then partner who took me to the hospital but by the time I got there it had passed. No tests were done at this time.

I then experienced another vertigo attack about three months later that was a full on attack lasting for about 4 hours with vomiting and unable to do anything but lay in bed and wait for the room to stop spinning. I couldn't close my eyes so just tried to focus on a spot on the wall. This just led to more vomiting. It soon passed and left me very weak for the next few hours. I'd drunk two bourbons the night before and put it down to that and have never drunk it since.

Around this time I attempted to enlist in the Air Force and they discovered during the physical that I had lost about 50% of my hearing on the right side. I didn't place any significance to this at the time but my right sided hearing continued to decline. At this time I also started noticing intermittent mild tinnitus.

The symptoms then went quiet until the next attack in 2007, I was getting ready for a work trip and the vertigo hit me. I started vomiting and lost control of my bowels. Thank God I was home. It passed after about two hours and while some weakness and nausea remained I was okay and went on the trip.

There was nothing then for a while and at the time I was very fit and going to the gym every day and I was blissfully unaware of any issue. The hearing and the tinnitus didn't bother me too much. I started a new relationship and it didn't hit me again until two days before Christmas 2008. This was my worse attack ever. The vertigo hit with a bang, I made it to the toilet and tried to lean against the wall, started vomiting and passed out. I came to on the floor, spinning out of control, vomiting everywhere and lost control of bowels. I crawled in to the shower with the help of my partner and continued to spin, vomit and lose bowel control. Terrified my partner called the ambulance and my mother in law. I managed, with her help to shower, get to the bed and get some pants on before my mother in law arrived. I was still spinning at this time. The ambulance arrived and to my surprise and my partner's horror they didn't do anything. The attack lasted for about 6 hours and for the next few days I was weak and still a bit nauseas. Despite all this we had a beautiful first Christmas together with her family and with my kids.

After this I started going for tests, the GP suggested it may be Meniere's and put me on Serc 16mg three times a day, suggested low sodium and gave me stemetil for the nausea. I had a brain MRI and a Neurologist ruled out any neurology issues. Things returned to normal so I went off any medication and continued normal life. I continued a normal diet with way too much coffee and disregarded the low sodium.

Around this time the attacks were becoming more frequent but still manageable and felt completely normal in between. I had an attack in Sydney when going up an elevator in a high rise motel. I got through the weekend and it was reasonably mild.

Around 2011 the frequency of the attacks increased. I saw an Ent who diagnosed me formally with Meniere's. I saw an audiologist and I had lost all hearing on the right side. I could very faintly hear noise but it was completely unrecognisable. My left sided hearing is still normal. It struck me at this

time that there was no actual testing. The ENT and GP had diagnosed my Meniere's based on my symptoms and hearing loss.

I had a very bad period at this time of frequent attacks lasting up to 12 hours several times a month. I was becoming very debilitated and finally in mid-2012 the ENT inserted T-Tubes ready for Gentamycin injections. Miraculously the attacks stopped straight after the T-Tubes were inserted so we didn't go ahead with the Gentamycin. The next three years were heaven. I experienced no symptoms except the deafness and tinnitus and I was very happy. I had given up coffee as well so felt this helped also.

I got through to the end of 2015, was single again for other reasons but life was good. Then at the end of 2015 I suffered an episode of Chronic Pancreatitis and the Grommets came out coincidentally around the same time. Ill health has continued since then and the vertigo attacks were about one every three months or so. That was bearable until last year. Things seem to change at the start of last year. The attacks started being about two or three a month and in between attacks I suffered constant motion sickness, disequilibrium with walking round like Jack Sparrow, poor balance resulting in a few falls and starting to need more help during attacks. The ENT put the T-Tubes back in in August and this helped reduce the number of attacks but didn't eradicate them as it had in the past. I saw Dr Welgampola at the balance clinic in Sydney. She did a few tests which I'm not even sure what they did other than to tell me I had the symptoms I already knew I had.

Now I am having more frequent severe attacks, they don't last as long but still go for a couple of hours. I constantly feel unwell in between and feel like I 'm walking on a tight rope with the slightest breeze pushing me in to an attack. I feel incredibly frustrated and want to just stay home in bed. Work has put me on a sedentary restriction which has helped but still having to function is getting tougher. I have my next appointment with the ENT in June. At this time I will ask for the Gentamycin injections. I want them to just destroy my ear so I never have to experience the vertigo again. I carry on with life but the struggle never goes away. I don't want to give up, I just want to be able to stay home when things are bad but of course finances and life does not allow this.

Throughout my journey I have been very lucky with beautiful love and support from my partners and my son and daughters. They have been my rock and not sure that I would have gotten through without them. Work has been amazingly supportive but I feel like lately their patience has run out, understandably, and they are trying to move me on. I hope things settle down soon, if not I will have no choice but to retire on a pension and stay home.

My current treatment is Serc 16mg three times a day, Stemetil 5mg prn, (I've been taking 10mg), Moduretics, No caffeine, low sodium, no alcohol and the T-Tube grommets. Of these I think only the Grommets are making a difference but I persevere with the others in case. I have also done Vestibular therapy with a physio and this has helped with the balance issues.

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