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Hydrops & Suggested Meniere's Diet Patient Information

Why do hydrops symptoms occur?

The fluid-filled hearing and balance structures of the inner ear normally function independently of the body's overall fluid balance. In the normal inner ear, the fluid is maintained at a constant volume and contains specific concentrations of sodium, potassium, chloride and other electrolytes. This fluid bathes the sensory cells of the inner ear and allows them to function normally.

With injury or degeneration of the inner ear structures, independent control may be lost. The volume and concentration of the inner ear fluid may fluctuate with changes in the body's fluid balance. This fluctuation can cause symptoms of hydrops. Hydrops symptoms may include pressure or fullness in the ears, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), hearing loss, dizziness and imbalance.

How do I control hydrops symptoms by diet?

Your inner ear fluid is influenced by certain substances in your blood and other body fluids. For example, when you eat foods that are high in salt or sugar, your blood concentrations of salt or sugar increase. This can then affect the concentration of substances in your inner ear and make your symptoms worse.

People with certain balance disorders must control the amount of salt and sugar that is added to food. Awareness of hidden salts and sugars in foods must also be considered. Limiting or reducing your use of caffeine and alcohol will also help reduce the symptoms of dizziness and ringing in the ears.

Information for patients, families and carers



What are the dietary goals to manage hydrops?

The overall goal is to ensure stable fluid balance so that secondary fluctuations in the inner ear fluid can be avoided. In order to achieve this goal, the following steps are recommended:

- Distribute your food and fluid intake evenly throughout the day. Eat the same amount for each meal and do not skip meals. If you eat snacks, have them at regular times.
- Avoid foods which have a high sugar or salt content. Aim for a diet which is high in fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains and low in canned, frozen and processed foods.
- Drink adequate amounts of fluid daily. Such fluid should include water, milk and low sugar fruit juices. Coffee, tea and carbonated soft drinks should not be counted as part of this intake. You should try and anticipate fluid loss that will occur with exercise or heat and replace these fluids before they are lost.
- You should avoid caffeine-containing fluids and foods such as coffee, tea and chocolate. Caffeine is a diuretic that causes excessive urinary loss of fluids. Caffeine also has stimulant properties that may make your symptoms worse.
- You should reduce or eliminate your alcohol intake. Alcohol can affect the inner ear directly and change the volume and concentration of the inner ear fluid. This can result in an increase in symptoms.
- You should avoid foods that contain MSG (monosodium glutamate). This is often present in pre-packaged food products and in some Asian food. It may increase symptoms in some patients.

What drugs need to be thought about in regards to hydrops?

Certain drugs can make hydrops symptoms worse. In order to minimise symptoms, the following steps are recommended:

- Unless required for a medical condition, avoid aspirin and medications that contain aspirin. These medications can increase dizziness and tinnitus. Discuss with your health practitioner if necessary.
- Avoid caffeine-containing medications
- Pay attention to over the counter medications as well as some drugs prescribed by health practitioners or alternative medicine therapists for other problems. Such medications may increase your symptoms.
- Avoid cigarettes. The nicotine present in cigarettes constricts blood vessels and will decrease the blood supply to the ear. This may make symptoms worse.

Information for patients, families and carers



Concerns or questions?

You can contact your ENT Specialist at the Melbourne ENT Group (MEG):

- Phone: 1300- 952-808
- Email: admin@melbentgroup.com.au
- Website: www.melbentgroup.com.au



Your GP is also the best contact for ongoing care and concerns.

Further information

The Meniere's Association of Australia has information resources available. These resources can be accessed as per the details below:

Meniere's Australia
Suite 4, 18-28 Skye Road
Frankston
Victoria
3199
Phone: (03) 9783 9233
Email: info@menieres.org.au

<http://www.menieres.org.au>



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