



The Ménière's Years

Part 15

Preparing for a Diagnosis

By

Mark McGee

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?

Ever found yourself asking that question about constant ringing in your ears, partial to complete loss of hearing, dizziness that comes and goes at the most inconvenient times, nausea that can become violent vomiting, falling and not knowing why? Welcome to the world of Ménière's Disease — maybe.

I spent ten years going to different doctors to get a diagnosis for my fatigue and dizziness in my 50's and 60's. Most of the physicians told me it was just part of aging. However, when I began having violent vertigo attacks in my late 60s I knew what I had was more than just getting older. A friend recommended an ENT who initially diagnosed me with 'vestibular neuritis.' However, when the vertigo attacks didn't stop after several weeks my doctor said I should get tested for something known as **Ménière's Disease**. That began a series of visits to various specialists to confirm the ENT's suspicions. He was right. I had Ménière's Disease. Still do.

How is the Diagnosis made?



If you find yourself in a similar situation and wonder what to expect with diagnostic testing for Ménière's, here's some information that may help you.

“The diagnosis of Meniere’s disease is made on the basis of the symptoms it causes. There is no single test which “proves” that a patient has Meniere’s disease. There are tests that may help confirm the diagnosis and will exclude other diseases. These tests may include tests of hearing (audiogram), nerve recordings (vestibular evoked myogenic potentials or VEMPs), tests of balance (video nystagmogram (VNG) and video head impulse tests (vHITs), blood tests, and possibly radiology scans of the head and ears (MRI).” [Stanford Medicine - Otolaryngology](#)

“The healthcare provider will review your health history and give you a physical exam. You may also need some tests, such as:

- **Hearing test.** This will help find any changes in hearing related to disease in the middle ear or other causes.
- **B a l a n c e t e s t .** This may include an electronystagmogram (ENG), rotational testing, or balance platform testing.
- **MRI.** This is done to see if a tumor is present.

- **Electrocochleography (ECOG).** This test measures electrical activity of the inner ear.

You may see specialists including:

- Audiologist
- An ear, nose, and throat specialist (ENT or otolaryngologist)
- Neurologist

[Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)

“At the current time, Meniere’s disease is a clinical diagnosis. That means that there isn’t a laboratory test, or a pathology result, or an imaging finding that can tell you that you have Meniere’s disease. Instead, the diagnosis is made by a clinician, after careful consideration of your symptoms, and reviewing your hearing test (audiogram). There are guidelines for making this diagnosis. Generally, if you meet the criteria in the guidelines (reproduced below), and if you don’t have another cause for dizziness as determined by your clinician, then you are determined to have Meniere’s disease.” [University of California San Francisco, Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery](#)

“Diagnosing Meniere’s disease can be difficult. Your doctor cannot examine the inner ear directly, so there is no simple way to tell if fluid has built up. Usually, your doctor will diagnose Meniere’s disease if you experience the typical symptoms and other possible causes of the symptoms have been ruled out.

Your doctor will start by taking a medical history, including information about past or current medical problems and medications that you take. He or she will ask you detailed questions about your symptoms, including when they started, how often and for how long they occur, and how disabling they are. Your doctor then will examine you, with a special focus on your ears, nose, throat, and balance system.

Tests that may be used to aid in diagnosis include:

- **A hearing test, also called audiometry.** This simple test can tell whether you are experiencing hearing problems, how much hearing you have lost, and what type of hearing problems you have. People with Meniere's disease have a particular type of damage to nerves important for normal hearing, which may make it difficult to tell the difference between similar-sounding words such as "boat" and "moat."
- **Computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI),** scans that allow physicians to see the brain, middle ear, and other structures inside the head.

These scans can check for tumors and other problems that can cause symptoms that are similar to Meniere's.

- **Electronystagmography or rotational testing.** These tests use the nerve connection between the ears and the eyes to examine your body's balance system. In a darkened room, electrodes are placed near the eyes. Then, the ear canal is stimulated with water, air, or changes in position. The electrodes measure how the inner ear responds. In Meniere's disease, your doctor can spot typical changes caused by the buildup of fluid in the inner ear.

If the diagnosis remains uncertain, you may be referred to an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat specialist) or neurologist.” [Harvard Health](#)



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The Diagnostic Process

Going through the diagnostic process for any illness can be expensive and time consuming. The same is true for a Ménière's diagnosis. You may see many doctors and specialists who will have their own payment method depending on your insurance. If you don't live in or near a

large city, you may have to travel many miles to see some of the specialists for testing. Some of the tests will be done in doctors' clinics — some at hospitals. I recommend you go into the diagnostic process with eyes wide open and a resolve to complete the process. It can seem a bit overwhelming at times, but getting answers to your health challenges are worth it. Once you know what's wrong, you can work with your medical team to determine the next steps.

Next Time

So, what are those 'next steps' if you receive a diagnosis of **Ménière's Disease**? I'll share some thoughts about that in the next *Ménière's Years* newsletter.

Resources

For more information about the diagnostic process, you may find these websites helpful:

[How to Find Your Meniere's Disease Doctor](#)

[Meniere's Disease Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Treatment - What Patients Need to Know](#)

[Meniere's Disease - NIH](#)

[Meniere's Disease Diagnosis](#)

[Meniere's Disease Diagnosis and Tests](#)

[Meniere's Disease](#)

[Meniere's Disease - Merck Manual Professional Version](#)

“... rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.” Romans 12:12

Here's to hope!

Thank you for reading Mark McGee's Newsletter. This post is public so feel free to share it.