

## Vestibular Migraine — What You Need to Know

Understanding your condition and your treatment plan.





### ► What is Vestibular Migraine?

Vestibular migraine is a form of migraine that affects your balance system. Migraine is more than a headache — it is a brain that is extra sensitive to certain triggers. In vestibular migraine, that sensitivity causes episodes of dizziness or vertigo (a spinning or rocking feeling), often with little or no headache.

Episodes can last minutes to hours, sometimes up to a day. You may feel sensitive to light, sound, and movement, and worse in busy places such as supermarkets or on screens. Between episodes most people feel well.

It is the most common cause of repeated dizziness in adults. Importantly, it is not a stroke or anything sinister, and it does not damage your ear or your brain. It is very treatable — most people get a large reduction in episodes with the right plan.

### VESTIBULAR MIGRAINE: COMMON FEATURES

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p><b>Episodes of dizziness or vertigo</b></p> <p>Spinning, rocking or unsteadiness, lasting minutes to a few hours.</p>               |  <p><b>Headache — but not always</b></p> <p>An episode may come with a headache, or with no headache at all.</p>       |
|  <p><b>Light, sound &amp; motion sensitivity</b></p> <p>Bright light, loud noise and movement often feel worse during an episode.</p> |  <p><b>Worse in busy visual places</b></p> <p>Supermarkets, traffic and scrolling screens can bring symptoms on.</p> |

*The common features of vestibular migraine — dizziness episodes, headache that may or may not be present, and sensitivity to light, sound, motion and busy visual places.*

### ► What to Expect Over Time

| Phase                    | How you feel                                                                                                                     | What is happening / what helps                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>During an episode</b> | Sudden dizziness or spinning for minutes to hours, sometimes with nausea, headache, or sensitivity to light, sound and movement. | Sit or lie somewhere safe, dim lights and noise, take any rescue medicine, and wait it out. Do not drive.                                                             |
| <b>Between episodes</b>  | Most people feel well, though some feel a little unsteady or sensitive in busy places for a day or two.                          | A good time to keep up the lifestyle habits and trigger diary that reduce the next episode.                                                                           |
| <b>Long term</b>         | Episodes come and go over the years, with better spells and worse spells.                                                        | Very treatable: with trigger control and, if needed, a daily preventive tablet, most people get a big reduction in episodes. No lasting damage to hearing or balance. |

### ► Your Management Plan

| ✓ DO — things that help                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | ✗ DON'T — things that make it harder                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep regular sleep, regular meals, and steady fluids.</li> <li>Limit caffeine and alcohol, and manage stress.</li> <li>Keep a trigger and episode diary to learn your own triggers.</li> <li>Take any preventive tablet as prescribed, every day.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skip meals, lose sleep, or let yourself get dehydrated.</li> <li>Use anti-sickness or sedating medicine every day — they are for occasional attacks only.</li> <li>Stop a preventive tablet early — it works best over 2–3 months.</li> </ul> |

- Build up gentle activity and balance exercises.

- Avoid all movement or busy places — gentle exposure helps.
- Ignore anxiety or low mood — they are common and treatable.

## ► Your Treatments — What They Do

| Treatment                       | What it does                                                                            | Important to know                                          |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Lifestyle &amp; triggers</b> | Regular routine and avoiding your triggers reduce how often episodes happen.            | First step for everyone; often enough on its own.          |
| <b>Anti-sickness medicine</b>   | Eases a bad episode and the nausea that comes with it.                                  | For occasional use during attacks only — not every day.    |
| <b>Prevention tablet</b>        | A daily tablet (such as propranolol or amitriptyline) lowers how often episodes happen. | Used if episodes are frequent; works best over 2–3 months. |
| <b>Balance physiotherapy</b>    | Exercises that retrain your balance and ease visual-motion sensitivity.                 | Helpful if you feel unsteady or sensitive to busy places.  |

## VESTIBULAR MIGRAINE: TREATMENT STEPS



Most people need only the first one or two steps to get good control.

*Treatment builds up step by step — most people need only the first one or two steps to get good control.*

### ⚠ Seek urgent help if you have

- Sudden weakness, numbness, double vision, or slurred speech.
- A sudden, severe headache unlike any before.
- New hearing loss or ringing in one ear.
- An episode far longer or more severe than usual that will not settle.

### ✓ The good news

- It is not a stroke, not a tumour, and not life-threatening.
- Most people get a large reduction in episodes with treatment.
- It does not cause permanent hearing loss or lasting damage.
- Anxiety and low mood from the dizziness are common and treatable.