



## **INNER EAR FLUID IMBALANCE**

An inner ear fluid imbalance can be characterized by dizziness ( or vertigo), ringing in the ears (or tinnitus), fullness in the ears, or hearing loss. Patients can have some or all of the above symptoms. When patients have all of the symptoms this condition is sometimes called Meniere's Disease. The cause of this condition is unknown, but predisposing factors include ear infection, allergy, head injury, and positive family history.

The inner ear is a delicate membranous structure surrounded by a bony hard shell. The two components of this system are the hearing organ ( or cochlea) and the balance organ (semicircular canals). These two systems are very near one another and share the same fluid system. Movements of this fluid move and distend the membranes allowing us to hear and maintain proper balance. This fluid is constantly being recycled and contains specific concentrations of minerals such as sodium ( salt). If too much fluid is produced, or not enough fluid is resorbed, then this is thought to cause an inner ear fluid imbalance. Also, eating food rich in salt can upset this delicate balance.

An inner ear fluid imbalance is diagnosed by performing a history, physical examination, and hearing test. Sometimes other tests are also necessary such as as ABR test, balance test, or an MRI scan. Treatment of an inner ear fluid imbalance involves following a strict low salt diet and taking water pill such as Dyazide. It may take several weeks for the treatment to show a noticeable benefit. It is important to restrict salt intake to 1500-2000 milligrams per day. This is more than just not using the salt shaker at meals. Many foods contain salt, especially pork products, chinese food, cheese, frozen dinners, and snacks such as potato chips. Also most restaurants and fast food places use a lot of salt. Most people with an inner ear fluid imbalance who closely follow these recommendations will do very well. People with severe symptoms not responding to medication and a low salt diet may respond to surgery.