



VESTIBULAR

DISORDERS ASSOCIATION

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Advice for the Holidays: Managing the Symptoms of a Vestibular Disorder

Parties/socializing

Social events can be the heart of any holiday celebration; they can also be very draining and exacerbate your vestibular symptoms. Taking a few precautions can allow you to participate without feeling totally wiped out the next day.

- Arrive early and leave early (if you feel you need to). There may be fewer people and therefore less noise early in the evening. It may also be easier to find a place to sit.
- If necessary, take short breaks by finding a quiet room; if there is no empty room available, try escaping to the bathroom for a few minutes.
- Establish an “exit plan” in advance with a person that is accompanying you or someone who can come and pick you up.
- Talk with the host/hostess in advance to let them know that you might need to leave early or find a quiet place to lie down.
- In a larger venue such as a restaurant or hotel, try to avoid sitting near ceiling fans, speakers, doors to the noisy kitchen, etc.
- At a dinner table, sit at an end or corner so you don’t have to move your head so much to follow dinner conversation. It also makes getting up from the table for a short break easier.

Flying Advice

Some people with vestibular disorders can have an increase in their symptoms when flying. Some suggestions for flying include:

- Choose seats in advance when you book your tickets (if you prefer window or aisle, etc.).
- Take a decongestant before getting on the plane (you may want to check with your doctor before choosing an over-the-counter decongestant).
- If migraines exacerbate your vestibular symptoms you may want to pre-medicate with an anti-migraine medication when you first board the airplane, especially if it’s a long flight.
- Wear a scopolamine patch to counteract any possible increase in nausea (these can be purchased at a pharmacy).
- Pre-board the airplane so that you can go ahead of everyone; you don’t need a doctor’s note, you just need to tell a gate attendant at the airport before



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they begin boarding.

- Use a cane or walking stick or a piece of luggage with a handle to hold onto to steady yourself when walking along the narrow aisles within the plane.
- Wear "EarPlanes", a type of ear plug that helps to equalize pressure better and limit noise (these can be found at a pharmacy).
- Hydrate! Drink lots of water to maintain the fluids in your body.

Taking a Train

- Sit facing forward in the direction the train is moving; avoid a backward facing seat.

Emergency Precautions

If you are traveling alone, especially by car, you may want to consider the following precautions:

- Carry a cell phone
- Consider wearing a medical ID bracelet and/or a Vitaband (a bracelet that allows emergency personnel to know that you have registered with Vitaband your medical information and/or an emergency contact person that can be accessed if you are not coherent). For more information on Vitaband, refer to www.vitaband.net. The bracelet is approx. \$20 with a maintenance fee of \$20 per year.
- Consider an OnStar service if you drive a GM car or truck, 2007 or newer. Cost is approx. \$199/year. More info can be found at www.onstar.com.