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### KEEPING TRACK

Taking note of when your symptoms spike can help you identify and avoid your triggers.

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## ARTICLE

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# Vestibular Disorder Triggers

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Vestibular disorder symptoms of vertigo--dizziness, headache, fatigue, tinnitus (ringing of the ears), and imbalance--can be triggered in various ways such as:

1. Diet
2. Environmental factors
3. Lifestyle choices
4. Habits
5. Travel
6. And more...

Because triggers differ for each individual and diagnosis, logging and journaling symptoms by intensity, type, diet, exercise, activity level, sleep habits, etc. may help identify patterns or factors that may be playing a role in causing or exacerbating your symptoms.

### DIET

Diet plays a large role in overall health, especially for some vestibular patients. A diet high in sugar, caffeine, and/or alcohol can impair balance and increase dizziness symptoms. Not drinking enough water may also worsen symptoms. Individuals who suffer from vestibular migraine often noticeable food triggers, which can include monosodium glutamate (MSG), aged cheeses, red wine, beer, and chocolate. Meniere's Disease can be affected by excessive sodium (salt) intake, which affects fluid levels in the inner ear. Keeping a food journal may identify possible food influences on triggers.

### ENVIRONMENT

Environmental factors may also trigger vestibular symptoms. For many vestibular patients, busy and bright environments like malls and grocery stores can cause dizziness. Others find that lighting, odors, noises, or patterns (on carpets, for example) can be problematic. Riding in vehicles can often provoke symptoms of motion sickness, which can be exacerbated by traveling on windy roads, repetitive starting/stopping of the vehicle, riding on congested highways, or excessive elevation changes. Air travel, with its changes in barometric pressure, can be especially problematic. Some individuals notice symptoms associated with changes in weather, or when allergens, like pollen, are present.



## HEAD TRAUMA/POSITIONING

Head trauma can trigger vertigo with positional head changes. Some individuals note an association between their dizziness and neck pain/stiffness. Repetitive or extreme motions of the head (e.g. tipping your head back to change a light bulb) can also provoke symptoms.

## READING

Reading text, whether digitally or on paper, may trigger symptoms, especially for those with migraine or light sensitivity.

## ILLNESS/INFECTION

Dizziness can often be triggered or made worse when a person is ill, such as from an upper respiratory infection.

## MEDICATIONS

Some medications may cause dizziness, tinnitus, or malaise/imbalance, so discussing these with your physician and pharmacist is beneficial.

## HORMONES

Hormonal changes may also be relevant, so this is a consideration for women undergoing menopause and those who suffer from migraines.

## LIFESTYLE FACTORS

While some of the triggers may be out of an individual's control, thankfully others are not. Lifestyle factors, such as sleep and exercise can affect overall dizziness frequency and intensity.

### Sleep

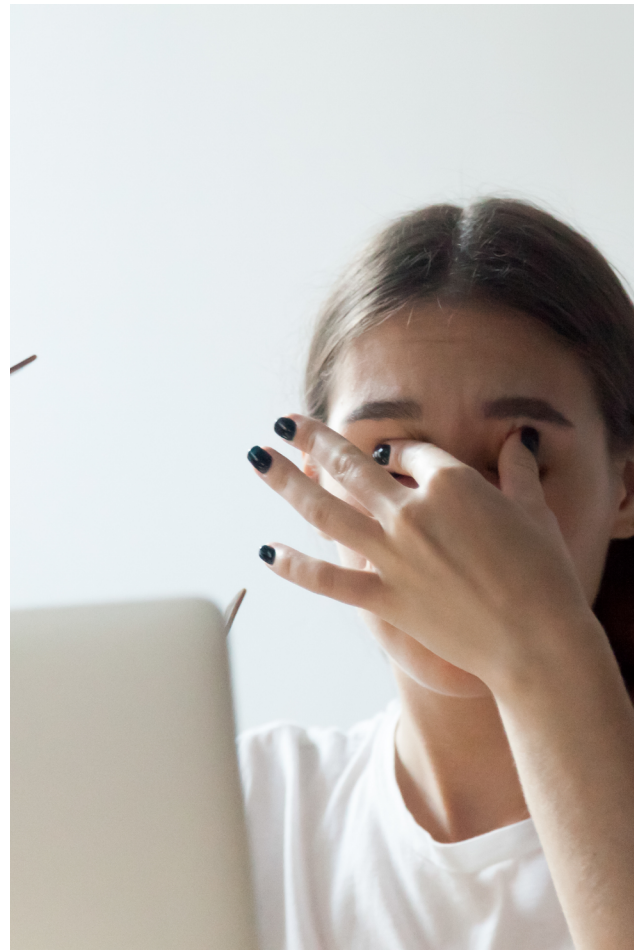
Sufficient sleep is fundamental for daily functioning, and not getting enough quality sleep can affect energy levels and overall dizziness.

### Exercise

Individuals who do not exercise regularly may also report increased symptoms.

## ANXIETY

Dizziness can cause anxiety and stress, and increased anxiety and stress levels can further trigger dizziness symptoms, causing a vicious cycle.



## DISCLAIMER

This list is not all-inclusive. You may be triggered by other issues, so make sure to talk to your doctor, physical therapist, or other health care professional for help in identifying your individual triggers and deciding on the best way to manage them.

For more information see the attached infographic or visit [vestibular.org](https://vestibular.org).

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# VESTIBULAR SYMPTOMS TRIGGERS



Triggers are stimuli that can aggravate and “awaken” vestibular symptoms. While triggers do not cause vestibular disorders, controlling triggers can help manage pain, tinnitus, nausea, dizziness, vertigo, and other symptoms. Triggers vary significantly person to person and illness to illness, and each person has patterns that can be identified and mitigated.

## PHYSIOLOGICAL

- Hormonal changes
- Inner ear pressure, altitude changes
- Body/head movements—up and down or side to side
- TMJ aggravation
- Head/neck/facial pain or injury (can also be a cause)

## PSYCHOLOGICAL

(These triggers can also be vestibular disorder symptoms.)

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Emotional/physical trauma

## LIFESTYLE

- Sleep problems/insomnia
- Fatigue or exertion
- Lack of/extreme exercise
- High/low sodium levels, dehydration
- Alcohol, nicotine and/or recreational drugs
- Diet—high tyramine or histamine levels
- Food allergies/sensitivities
- Biggest food triggers: natural flavors (MSG), aged cheeses/meats, chocolate, caffeine, citrus (see migraine or Meniere’s diets)

## ENVIRONMENTAL/SENSORY

- Barometric pressure changes
- Humidity
- Weather changes
- Allergies
- Lighting—fluorescent, strong sunlight/dappling, darkness
- Loud noise—music, alarms, crowds
- Air pollution
- Motion (car, walking, biking, etc.)
- Wide open spaces or spaces with overwhelming stimuli

## TRACKING TOOLS:



Patient Logs



Migraine Buddy App



Symptom Trigger Tool  
Rewiring Tinnitus Trigger Tool

## RESOURCES:

**The Dizzy Cook** (Alicia Wolf) [thedizzycCook.com](http://thedizzycCook.com)  
**Timothy C. Hain, MD** [dizziness-and-balance.com](http://dizziness-and-balance.com)  
**Heal Your Headache** book by David Buchholz

**True Kaylaisms** (Kayla McCain) [truekaylaisms.com](http://truekaylaisms.com)  
**Mind Over Meniere's** (Glenn Schweitzer) [mindovermenieres.com](http://mindovermenieres.com)  
**VeDA** (Vestibular Disorders Association) [vestibular.org](http://vestibular.org)

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