

Lifestyle Modifications for Patients with Vestibular Migraine

Key Strategies to Reduce Symptoms and Improve Recovery

Dr. James Mortensen PT, DPT
Physical Therapy Expert Witness

Vestibular migraine is one of the most common causes of dizziness, vertigo, motion sensitivity, visual intolerance, and imbalance. Unlike traditional migraine, vestibular migraine often presents with symptoms that extend far beyond headache alone. Patients may experience episodic dizziness, rocking sensations, disequilibrium, brain fog, visual motion sensitivity, nausea, and exercise intolerance. These symptoms can significantly impact daily function and quality of life.

Medical management can play an important role in treatment, but lifestyle modification is often one of the most powerful and underutilized interventions in reducing symptom severity and frequency.

Successful management requires reducing cumulative neurologic stress while improving physiologic resilience. Put simply, the goal is to reduce stressors on the nervous system while supporting recovery through consistent daily habits.

Optimize Vitamin D Status

Vitamin D plays a critical role in immune regulation, inflammatory control, neuromuscular function, and overall nervous system health. Low vitamin D levels are common and may contribute to increased inflammation, fatigue, poor recovery, and heightened migraine susceptibility.

Patients with vestibular migraine should consider monitoring serum vitamin D levels through laboratory testing, particularly 25-hydroxy vitamin D levels. Many individuals are deficient without realizing it.

Optimizing vitamin D status may help support improved neurologic function and reduce susceptibility to migraine triggers.

Magnesium Supplementation

Magnesium is one of the most important supplements for patients with vestibular migraine. It plays a major role in neuronal stability, neurotransmitter regulation, vascular function, and migraine prevention.

Magnesium deficiency has been associated with increased migraine frequency and greater nervous system excitability. In vestibular migraine patients, inadequate magnesium may contribute to sensory overload, dizziness, headaches, poor sleep, and elevated stress response.

Among available forms, **magnesium L-threonate** stands out.

Magnesium L-threonate is unique because of its superior ability to cross the blood-brain barrier compared to many other magnesium formulations. This makes it particularly attractive when targeting central neurologic symptoms.

Potential benefits include:

- Improved neurologic recovery
- Reduced neuronal hyperexcitability
- Improved sleep quality
- Better cognitive performance
- Potential reduction in migraine frequency

Other forms such as glycinate and citrate can still be beneficial, but magnesium L-threonate is often preferred when targeting central nervous system regulation.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids provide powerful anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective benefits. They support brain health, vascular function, and healthy inflammatory balance.

Potential benefits include:

- Reduced systemic inflammation
- Improved neuronal membrane function
- Better recovery capacity
- Improved vascular health

Given the role of neuroinflammation in migraine disorders, omega-3 supplementation can be an important component of care.

CoQ10 with Vitamins C and E

Coenzyme Q10 supports mitochondrial energy production and cellular function. This is particularly relevant in migraine disorders, where mitochondrial dysfunction may contribute to symptoms.

Patients with vestibular migraine commonly report fatigue, exercise intolerance, and reduced neurologic reserve.

Potential benefits include:

- Improved energy production
- Reduced oxidative stress
- Improved neurologic resilience
- Potential migraine reduction

Vitamins C and E provide additional antioxidant support and may help combat oxidative stress.

Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin)

Vitamin B2 has been widely studied in migraine prevention and is commonly recommended as part of migraine management.

Vitamin B2 may help:

- Reduce migraine frequency
- Improve cellular energy production
- Support neurologic function

It is often used alongside magnesium and CoQ10.

Prioritize Sleep Quality

Sleep disruption is one of the most common and significant triggers for vestibular migraine. Poor sleep quality, inconsistent sleep schedules, and inadequate sleep duration can significantly worsen symptoms.

Sleep should be treated as a major therapeutic priority.

Key sleep strategies include:

- Maintain consistent sleep and wake times
- Prioritize adequate sleep duration
- Reduce stimulation before bed
- Avoid irregular sleep schedules

Consistency helps regulate the nervous system and improves recovery capacity.

Reduce Screen Time Before Bed

Excessive evening screen exposure can worsen vestibular migraine symptoms. Blue light exposure, visual stimulation, and cognitive overload may impair melatonin production and negatively affect sleep.

Patients should aim to reduce screen time for at least **2 hours before bedtime**.

This includes limiting:

- Phones
- Tablets
- Television
- Computers

Calming activities such as reading, stretching, breathwork, or quiet conversation are better alternatives before bed.

Final Thoughts

Vestibular migraine management requires a comprehensive approach. While medication may help many patients, meaningful improvement often depends heavily on lifestyle factors.

Patients who improve sleep, reduce sensory overload, optimize nutritional status, and support neurologic health often experience substantial improvements in symptom control.

Small, consistent changes can create meaningful improvements in dizziness, migraine burden, and overall quality of life.