What happens in Meniere's Disease?

To help your patient understand his disease, describe ear structure and function. Begin by explaining that sound waves enter the ear canal and strike the eardrum, causing it to vibrate and creating pressure on the ossicles (three small bones in the middle ear). The ossicles, in turn, vibrate, transmitting sound waves to the inner ear.

Describe the inner ear as small enough to fit inside a marble. It contains two structures: the cochlea and the semicircular canals. Together, these two structures form the labyrinth, named for its complicated twists, bends, and turns. The snail-shaped cochlea transduces sound waves into nerve impulses, which are carried to the brain. The loop-shaped semicircular canals detect changes in balance and body orientation. Explain that Meniere's disease is characterized by increased fluid pressure within the labyrinth, which causes hearing loss, dizziness, and related symptoms.