



“The 12 Critical Questions Regarding Dizziness, Imbalance and Falling”

1. Are Dizziness, the Fear of Falling and Balance Disorders an unavoidable part of aging? Absolutely not! Studies indicate that a tendency to fall or symptoms of dizziness in the elderly should not be dismissed as part of aging, but may be important signs of disease that may be cured or controlled...And the vestibular system (inner ear) should not be ruled out as a source of these symptoms.

2. What are some of the causes of Dizziness or Balance Problems?

Viral infections, head colds, flu, meningitis, swimmers ear, sore throat and the insertion in the ear canal of foreign objects, as well as many other diseases can cause dizziness, imbalance and the fear of falling. Also, blows to the head or ear, loud noises, pressure changes such as blowing your nose, trying to squelch a sneeze, and many drugs and chemicals, including alcohol are known for causing dizziness and imbalance.

3. What are the 7 main categories of symptoms of Dizziness and Balance Disorders?

Many of the symptoms experienced by people affected by dizziness and balance disorders can be obscure and frightening. This list can aid those who have been unable to make sense out of their seemingly abnormal sensations and symptoms.

- 1. Vision:** Objects appear to jump, reading and writing difficulty, lights glow, blurred vision and poor depth perception.
- 2. Hearing:** Hearing can fluctuate, be lost completely, ringing or buzzing, your ears may feel full.
- 3. Gastrointestinal:** Continual or intermittent nausea, a hangover-like feeling or seasick sensation.
- 4. Memory:** Poor memory, you may forget what you are talking about, confusion, grope for words.
- 5. Coordination:** Clumsiness, drop things, imbalance, muscle and joint pain, slurred speech.
- 6. Emotions:** Loss of self-reliance, self-confidence, anxiety, phobias, panic attacks, depression and fear of falling.
- 7. Other:** Headaches, discomfort caused by temperature changes, pressure changes, wind currents, fatigue, everyday tasks are exhausting, violent whirling sensations (vertigo) and vomiting.

4. What does it mean when we say “The Vestibular System?”

The vestibular system is the balance system in the inner ear. It is a complex structure of fluid-filled tubes and chambers. Specialized nerve endings inside these structures detect the position and movement of the head and also detect the direction of gravity. The signals from the vestibular system make up a critically important part of the sensory information that the brain needs in order to help control balance in standing and walking, and also to control certain types of reflexive eye movements that make it possible to see clearly while walking and running.

5. Why are patients with Inner Ear Disorders often referred to Physical or Occupational Therapy?

Often times, patients with inner ear disorders develop secondary symptoms that are usually associated with reduced activity levels. They include decreased strength, loss of range of motion, increased tension, particularly in the cervical and shoulder region, leading to muscle fatigue and headaches. Until recently, little was known about vestibular disorders and their treatment. Most physicians believed that dizziness and vertigo were simply a part of getting older, so they either informed their patients they had to live with it, or they sent them to a physical therapist that understood very little about the inner ear and vestibular disorders. Even today, too many physicians and health care providers tell their patients that they have to live with it, or just send them to a general physical therapy.