

DOES HEARING LOSS AFFECT BALANCE?

- The **inner ear** is responsible for both hearing and balance function.
- Hearing loss indicates that there is a problem with the hearing organ (cochlea) in the inner ear. Problems with the inner ear may also include the balance organs due to an underlying condition that impacts the inner ear as a whole.

CHANGES IN HEARING AND BALANCE OFTEN HAPPEN AS WE AGE

Individuals with untreated hearing loss are more likely to have a history of falling.¹⁻² **WHY?**

- Reduced vestibular and balance system function
- Reduced awareness of the surroundings
- Reduced cognitive resources available for balance due to hearing loss

Hearing Loss and Balance

WHAT CAN CAUSE HEARING LOSS AND BALANCE PROBLEMS?



Inner Ear Infections



Meniere's Disease



Medications Toxic to the Inner Ear



Blood Circulation Problems



Head Injury



Tumors



Genetics

IMPROVE YOUR BALANCE⁴

- Consider conditions such as **vision changes and reduced sensitivity in your feet.**
- Ask your health-care provider about the **impact of your medications** on dizziness and balance concerns.
- **Have your hearing tested annually.**³ If you have concerns about your balance or hearing, evaluation by an audiologist can help identify the cause.
- Ask your health-care team about **balance therapy options** that can improve your balance.
- **Evaluate your home** for risks.
 - Remove tripping hazards such as rugs.
 - Use non-slip mats in the shower or bath.
 - Add hand rails in the bathtub and next to the toilet.

Connect with an Audiologist Near You!

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Lin FR, Ferrucci L. (2012) Hearing loss and falls among older adults in the United States. *Arch Intern Med* 172(4):369–371.
- ² Vilkanen A, Kaprio J, Pyykkö I, et al. (2009) Hearing as a predictor of falls and postural balance in older female twins. *J Gerontol Biol Sci Med Sci* 64(2): 312–317.
- ³ National Institute on Aging. Prevent Falls and Fractures [online]. www.nia.nih.gov/health/prevent-falls-and-fractures. Accessed July 3, 2019.
- ⁴ Rummalla K, Karin AM, Hullar TE. (2014) The effect of hearing aids on postural stability. *Laryngoscope* 125(3): 720–723.