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**Hearing Plays a Primary Role in Falls in Older Adults**

American Academy of Audiology reports on the importance of audiologists in the identification and treatment of hearing and balance disorders

**RESTON,** **Va., Aug. 23, 2019—**The American Academy of Audiology recently provided [recommendations to the Senate Special Committee on Aging](https://www.audiology.org/sites/default/files/AAA%20Senate%20Aging%20Comments%20Final%202019.pdf) as it seeks to investigate the prevention and management of falls and fall-related injuries for older adults. In the comments, the Academy explained that audiologists are the primary healthcare professionals who evaluate, diagnose, treat and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in patients of all ages.

Vestibular symptoms and dizziness are a significant problem in older adults and it has been estimated that 30% of persons older than 60 years and almost 50% of those over the age of 85 years have experienced these and related symptoms. [According to a study](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1108740) done by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, individuals with untreated mild hearing loss were nearly three times more likely to have a history of falling.

[A recent Canadian study](https://www.cihi.ca/en/falls-and-vehicle-collisions-top-causes-of-injury-hospitalizations-for-seniors) looked at 2017 to 2018 hospital data and determined that the leading cause for hospitalization in seniors is falls, with [51% of all injury-related hospitalizations occurring in seniors.](https://www.cihi.ca/en/injuries-among-seniors) The U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging identified this issue as one of the greatest citing the fact that in 2016, approximately three million older adults were treated in emergency rooms after falling and that the annual total direct medical cost of fall-related injuries for older adults is approximately $50 billion annually.

“We know that there’s a direct link between hearing loss and falls,” said the American Academy of Audiology President Lisa Christensen, Au.D. who is also audiology program manager for Cook Children’s Medical Center in Ft. Worth, Texas. “Audiologists are experts in the area of vestibular-specific evaluation and intervention,” she explained. Audiologists perform an extensive battery of tests as part of the evaluation of the vestibular system. Depending on the findings of the exams, an audiologist may provide management options and, in some cases, may refer the patient to an otolaryngologist, neurologist or physical therapist.

“It’s so important for older adults to see an audiologist,” added Christensen, “[falls are the leading cause of accidental death](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10349892) after the age of 65 years.”

The numbers of Americans facing hearing loss is at a record high and rising annually. [More than 40 million](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/66/wr/mm6605e3.htm?s_cid=mm6605e3_w) Americans have some type of hearing loss.

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The American Academy of Audiology is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of approximately 14,000 audiologists nationwide, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders. For more information or to find an audiologist, go to [www.howsyourhearing.org](http://www.howsyourhearing.org).