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**Studies Link Vestibular/Balance Disorders and Dizziness to**

**Hearing Ability and Falls**

Balance Awareness Week is Sept. 19-25, 2021

**RESTON,** **Va., Aug. 25**.**, 2021—**The American Academy of Audiology is a supporter of Balance Awareness Week, September 19 to 25. The observance has been designated by the Vestibular Disorders Association to increase awareness about balance problems. While some balance disorders are incurable, faster and more accurate diagnosis, along with effective treatment and coping strategies can greatly improve quality of life.

Good hearing health is important in preventing falls as well as other conditions. Vestibular/balance disorders, including vertigo and dizziness, often associated with hearing loss, are associated with a number of conditions including depression, anxiety, panic disorders, fainting or light-headedness, nausea and imbalance.

Falls are the leading cause of injury and death in older adults. While there are many reasons why older adults are at risk of falling, including medications, vision loss, diabetes, heart disease and confusion; hearing loss also is associated with a higher risk for falling. “We know that there’s a direct link between untreated hearing loss and falls,” said Angela Shoup, Ph.D., president of the American Academy of Audiology and executive director of the Callier Center for Communication Disorders. She is also a professor of Speech, Language and Hearing in the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences at the University of Texas at Dallas. Anyone with symptoms impacting their balance should see an audiologist. “Audiologists perform an extensive battery of tests as part of the evaluation of the vestibular system,” Shoup explained. 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.

“Balance Awareness Week provides educational information so that consumers know where to turn when they have dizziness, feel faint or have balance issues,” said Shoup. She also explained that audiologists are healthcare professionals who evaluate, treat and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in patients of all ages. Tinnitus, which is a type of ringing in the ears, also can be associated with balance issues.

Vestibular symptoms and dizziness are significant problems in older Americans. It is estimated that 30% of persons older than 60 years and almost 50% of those over the age of 85 years have dizziness and balance challenges along with related symptoms. [According to a study](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1108740) 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.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately [48 million Americans](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/hearing_loss/public_health_scientific_info.html) have some form of hearing loss. Those numbers continue to rise annually. For more information on vestibular disorders related to balance, click [here](https://www.audiology.org/practice-resources/public-awareness/balance-awareness-week/). For more information on hearing loss or to find an audiologist, go to [www.howsyourhearing.org](http://www.howsyourhearing.org).

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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).