



Dizziness and Balance Problems



What is Balance?

- **The ability to keep yourself steady and upright.**
- **Balance is controlled by the vestibular (in the inner ear), visual and somatosensory (perception of our body in space) systems.**
- **With great precision, these systems work together with the brain to maintain balance.**

Any damage or impairment to one or more of these systems will cause balance problems.

Symptoms of balance problems:

- **Falling or near falling.**
- **Vertigo: a sensation of your surroundings spinning.**

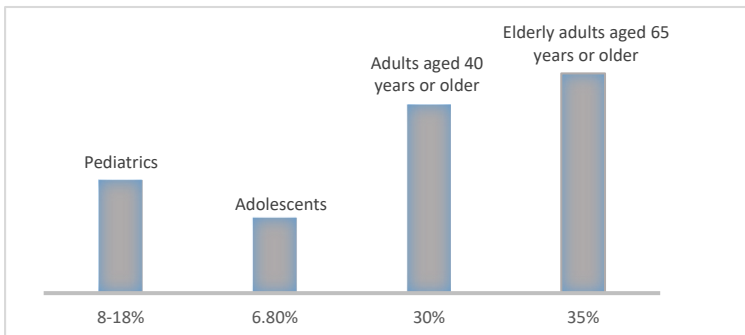


- **Dizziness: some describe it as imbalance, unsteadiness, lightheadedness, floating, or rocking sensation.**
- **Nausea and/or vomiting.**
- **Motion sickness.**
- **Visual disturbances or changes in vision with head or body movement.**



Studies have shown:

The prevalence of dizziness and vertigo is approximately 20% to 30% of the world's population; it affects about:



Increased prevalence among females compared to males.

Annually, approximately one-third of the population above the age of 65 fall at least once due to balance problems.

Causes of balance problems:

1. Otologic causes related to the middle and/or inner ear such as:

- **Middle ear infection and/or diseases**
- **Changes and/or abnormalities in the vestibular organs**
- **Inflammation of the auditory-vestibular nerve**
- **Meniere's disease**
- **Auditory-vestibular nerve tumors (e.g. acoustic neuroma)**

- **Some medications that may affect the function of the inner ear**

2. Non-Otologic causes such as, but not limited to:

- **Central/neurological causes:**
 - **Vestibular migraines**
 - **Strokes**
 - **Multiple sclerosis**
 - **Cerebellum and brainstem tumors**
- **Cardiovascular causes:**
 - **Diabetes**
 - **Blood pressure changes**
 - **Hypothyroidism**
 - **Heart diseases**
 - **Orthostatic hypotension (a drop in blood pressure with change in position from sitting to standing)**

3. Other causes, such as:

- **Head trauma**
- **Autoimmune diseases**
- **Rheumatoid arthritis**
- **Osteoarthritis**
- **Visual deficits**
- **Psychological conditions (e.g. anxiety, depression, or bipolar disorder)**
- **Unknown causes**

Living with balance problems:

- **May negatively impact daily activities such as walking, bathing, dressing, driving, shopping, and/or participating in social activities.**
- **Increases the likelihood of injuries and fractures secondary to falls, especially for older adults.**

- **May impact memory, concentration, and/or spatial cognitive function (spatial memory and spatial navigation).**
- **Imbalance may directly or indirectly affect the quality of life; do not neglect them!**

Just your fear of falling or not being able to do things you used to do because of that fear could be a sign of a balance problem.



Who can help?

- **Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms.**
- **Depending on your symptoms and medical history, your doctor may refer you to an Audiologist to do a hearing and balance examination, or to other specialties such as Neurology, Ear-Nose-Throat (ENT), and/or Physical Therapy for further investigations, as needed.**





What's next?

- **Once the cause is identified, effective treatment and management can be implemented.**
- **Treatment and management options will primarily be focused on the cause and the accompanying symptoms that you may have.**

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