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**Linking Vestibular/Balance Disorders and Dizziness to Hearing Ability and Falls in Older Americans**

Balance Awareness Week is Sept. 15-21, 2019

**RESTON,** **Va., Aug. 26, 2019—**The American Academy of Audiology has partnered with the Vestibular Disorders Association for Balance Awareness Week, September 15 to 21, to remind Americans about the importance of good hearing health in preventing falls as well as other conditions. Vestibular/balance disorders and dizziness, often associated with hearing loss, cause a number of conditions including depression, anxiety, panic disorders, vertigo, fainting or light-headedness, nausea and imbalance.

“Balance Awareness Week provides educational information so that consumers know where to turn when they have dizziness, feel faint or have balance issues,” explained Lisa Christensen, Au.D., president of the American Academy of Audiology and also audiology program manager for Cook Children’s Medical Center in Ft. Worth, Texas. She also explained that audiologists are the primary healthcare professionals who diagnose, treat and manage hearing loss and balance disorders in patients of all ages. Tinnitus, which is a type of ringing in the ears, can also be associated with balance issues.

Vestibular symptoms and dizziness are significant problems in older Americans. 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.

“We know that there’s a direct link between hearing loss and falls,” said Christensen. 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.

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).