

# Balance and Vestibular Awareness



When a child is first learning to walk, it is fairly certain they will fall down. Probably many times. But the more they practice, the better they become at using their balance. The same is true for a child learning to ride a bike without training wheels. It usually doesn't take long for them to learn how to use their balance to keep the bike from tipping over. Balance is something we take for granted and don't think about much until we don't have it any longer.

## ***Balance Awareness Week***

September 15th through the 21st is Balance Awareness Week, which was designated by the Vestibular Disorders Association (VeDA) 22 years ago. According to the VeDA, 69 million Americans suffer from chronic balance issues associated with a vestibular disorder. The majority of these people are elderly, although a vestibular disorder can happen at any age.

## ***Vestibular Disorders***

The body's vestibular system includes the parts of the inner ear and brain that help control balance. If the system is damaged by disease, aging, or injury, vestibular disorders such as vertigo can result. Most likely you have been dizzy or lost your balance temporarily – whether you felt seasick on a boat, finished a carnival ride, or even spun around in a chair too quickly. However, those feelings of the room spinning, or nausea were temporary, and your sense of balance resumed. Imagine if that feeling stayed with you all day, or as you lie down, causing your daily activities to come to a standstill. Often symptoms of a vestibular disorder can be invisible, hard for a person to describe, or even debilitating.



Symptoms of a vestibular disorder can include dizziness, imbalance, hearing changes, or vision disturbance. Not all symptoms may be experienced by every person who has a vestibular disorder. These symptoms can appear gradually over time or suddenly.

1. Vertigo and dizziness are a spinning or whirling sensation even when a person is not moving. It can cause lightheadedness or a sensation of rocking.

2. Imbalance can mean it is difficult to maintain a straight posture or the head needs to be tipped to one side. It can also cause a person to tend to look downward to confirm the location of the ground, have difficulty walking in the dark, or have the tendency to touch or hold onto something when standing and walking.

3. Hearing changes can mean hearing loss, sensitivity to loud noises or environments, or even that sudden loud noises can increase dizziness.

4. Vision symptoms can include poor depth perception, sensitivity to moving or flickering lights, seeing double, or trouble focusing and tracking objects with the eyes.



### ***Vestibular Therapy***

The good news for people living with a vestibular disorder is that vestibular therapy can help improve balance and reduce problems related to dizziness, whether it's an occasional occurrence or an on-going issue. Clear Lake Physical Therapy and Rehab Specialists (CLPTRS) can help those who are having balance issues, suffer from vertigo, or suffer from symptoms of a vestibular disorder. Call Annie Martin at (555)555-5555 to schedule an appointment.