

WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES FOR DIZZINESS, BALANCE PROBLEMS AND FALL-RELATED INJURIES?

Dizziness is a common occurrence. Second to lower back pain, dizziness is the most common complaint heard in doctors' offices. Forty-two percent of the adult population report dizziness or vertigo to their physicians. What causes dizziness?

Cheklist of common causes for dizziness and balance problems:

- Patients over 55 with onset of presbyastasis or degeneration of the normal balance mechanisms with age
- Vestibular disorders or various types of inner ear disease
- Motion sickness patients
- Infections of the ear or central nervous system
- Ototoxic drugs such as aminoglycosides or chemotherapy
- Disease affecting the cerebral cortex, cerebellum and brainstem
- Post-operative total joint replacement surgical patients
- Neoplastic and degenerative diseases of the central nervous system such as basal ganglia disorders and multiple sclerosis
- Tumors of the vestibular or acoustic nerves
- Head trauma – the effects can linger for months to years
- Visual system diseases
- Hyperventilation or hysterical patients
- Medications affecting the central nervous system such as neuroleptics, sedative-hypnotics, anti-depressants, centrally acting antihistamines
- Cerebrovascular disease – decreases blood flow to the brain and can be caused by dehydration, orthostatic hypotension, vasovagal syndrome, osteoarthritis, atherosclerosis
- Peripheral neuropathy – diminished nerve function in the legs or feet causing unsteadiness when standing or walking

These patients should be referred immediately for balance screening, and if medically indicated and necessary, for complete balance testing and vestibular rehabilitation therapy.