

Hearing & Balance Disorders

Vertigo and balance disorders are a significant public health concern in Canada. According to the National Institutes for Health, dizziness and vertigo is the second most common complaint in a physician's office.¹ Dizziness affects approximately 50 percent of adult Canadians at some time in their lives, and it is estimated that 1.5 million Canadians suffer from chronic vestibular problems each year²

Facts & Stats

- Symptoms from vestibular dysfunction can range from mild to severe and may include imbalance or unsteadiness, vertigo, lightheadedness, visual disturbances, nausea, headaches, muscular aches in the neck and back, motion intolerance, and problems with concentration and memory
- Vestibular dysfunction can occur coexist with hearing loss, tinnitus, aural fullness, sensitivity to pressure changes, and sensitivity to loud sounds³
- Peripheral disorders include benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV), Ménière's disease, vestibular neuritis and labyrinthitis, vestibular schwannoma, perilymphatic fistula, and superior semicircular canal dehiscence syndrome (SSCD)
- Central disorders include vestibular migraine, brainstem or cerebellar stroke, and vertebrobasilar insufficiency
- The most common vestibular disorder is BPPV, with an estimated 300,000 new cases diagnosed in Canada each year⁴
- BPPV is the cause of approximately 50% of dizziness in older patients⁵
- Vestibular disorders are linked to an increased incidence of falls, accounting for more than half of all injuries among Canadians aged 65 years and over⁶
- Less than 10% of patients with balance and vestibular disorders are evaluated by a specialist (Audiologist, Otologist, Otolaryngologist or Neurologist)⁷

What You Can Do to Help

Vertigo and balance difficulties can have a significant impact on an individual's daily life and activity, and may lead to minor or major injuries. Vestibular Audiologists provide patient-centered care in the prevention, identification, diagnosis, and evidence-based treatment of hearing and balance disorders for people of all ages. In order to perform vestibular testing and treatment in Canada, Audiologists must obtain continuing education and hands-on experience beyond what is currently available through entry-level training.⁸

Audiologic and balance assessments are recommended when a person has: rapid, involuntary eye movement (nystagmus), complaints of vertigo or dizziness, balance dysfunction, difficulty walking, and suspected disease of the vestibular system. Test results, in combination with medical findings, help determine the possible causes of vestibular dysfunction, and can lead to a management plan that will help control the effects of dizziness, decrease the risk of injury, and lead to increased functional independence⁹

References

1 www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/balance-disorders

2 <http://physiotherapyworks.ca/services/vestibular-rehabilitation/>.

3 Mira E. Int J Clin Pract. 2008; 62(1) :109-14

4 Neuhauser HK et al. Sem Neurol. 2009; 29(5), 473-481

5 Fife TD et al. Neurol. 2008; 70:2067-2074

6 The Public Health Agency of Canada (2014): www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php

7 www.jefferson.edu/university/jmc/departments/otolaryngology/centers/balance_hearing/patient_services/balance_disorders.html

8 www.sacoac.ca/sites/default/files/resources/final_draft_vestibular_scoping_review.pdf

9 www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/AIS-Dizziness-Balance.pdf).



Ear & Hearing Clinic

JULIANE SHANTZ · DOCTOR OF AUDIOLOGY

Your Partner in Hearing Health Care

1.833.669.4425

Elmira • Kitchener • Palmerston • www.earandhearingclinic.com