

Dizziness and Physical Therapy

Excerpt from American Physical Therapy Association article: Authored in 2011 by Bridgett Wallace, PT, DPT; Laura O. Morris, PT, board-certified clinical specialist in neurologic physical therapy; Bob Wellmon, PT, PhD, board-certified clinical specialist in neurologic physical therapy; and APTA's Neurology Section. Reviewed and revised in 2020 by Carrie W. Hoppes, PT, PhD, board-certified clinical specialist in neurologic and orthopaedic physical therapy and Karen H. Lambert, PT, DPT, board-certified clinical specialist in neurologic physical therapy.

Dizziness is a common problem, especially among older adults. In fact, for people over the age of 65, dizziness is one of the most common reasons for doctor visits and hospitalizations. Regardless of the cause of dizziness, the sooner you get help, the better. Physical therapists help people experiencing dizziness ease their symptoms, reduce their risk of falling, and get back to the activities they enjoy.

What is Dizziness?

Dizziness is a feeling of spinning, floating, or lightheadedness. Dizziness, and the balance problems that may come with it, can be caused by many factors, including:

- Inner ear disorders (vestibular disorders);
- Injury or trauma to the inner ear;
- Disruption in the network of nerves between the inner ear and the eyes that helps to stabilize our vision;
- Conditions such as low blood pressure or low blood sugar;
- Use of many medications, vitamins, or supplements;
- Diseases such as arthritis in the neck or diabetes;
- Brain disorders such as Parkinson disease or stroke.

Above all, dizziness can increase the risk of **falling** — a serious health concern for older adults. The earlier you get treatment, the better.



How Can a Physical Therapist Help?

The good news is that most dizziness and balance disorders can be successfully treated. Dizziness and balance problems are certainly not an expected part of aging.

Your physical therapist can perform tests to determine the cause of your dizziness and assess your risk of falling. There is often more than one cause of dizziness and imbalance. Depending on your test results, your physical therapist may recommend additional testing or a consultation with your physician. They also may refer you to a specialist.

Your physical therapist will create a personalized treatment plan for you based on your medical evaluation and your goals for recovery. Their primary focus will be to manage your dizziness and help you get moving again. During your recovery, your physical therapist will teach you strategies to help you cope with your symptoms.

Physical therapy treatments for dizziness can take many forms. Your unique program will depend on your unique problems. Your treatment plan might include exercises to:

- Improve your balance.
- Improve the network of nerves between the inner ear and the eyes that helps to stabilize your vision during head turns.
- Improve your strength, flexibility, and heart health to increase your overall physical health and well-being.

The physical therapists at 1st Choice Physical Therapy & Balance Centers are all Master Level Balance Retrainers and experienced in treating people with neurological and vestibular problems. Call us today so we can help you get back on your feet confidently.

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