

# The Villages Health®

AUDIOLOGY PATIENT NEWSLETTER  
September 2022



## Be Careful, Don't Fall.

Did you know poor hearing acuity may increase the risk of falls potentially reducing mobility, ability to perform daily activities and life expectancy?

Intuitively and from experience, we realize **falling is a bad thing**. From toddlers to elders, “be careful, don’t fall” is sound advice. At home, work and play, there are falling risks every day. While many consist of environmental factors such as slipping on a rug or tripping over an object, more should be mindful how our body’s vestibular system affects balance.

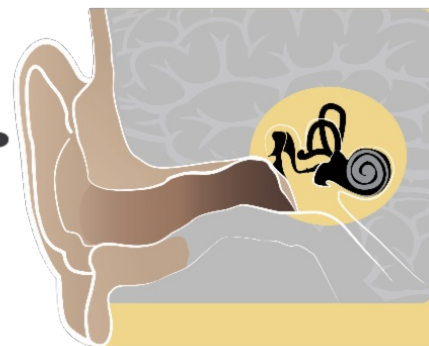
As a useful learning foundation, Safe Balance relies on normal functionality of three sensory inputs:



**Vision**, to see and navigate daily environments. Visual Motion perception has a correlation to risk of falls, in addition to visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, and stereo acuity.



**Proprioception**, often called kinesthesia, is how body position and self-movement relates to sensory neurons in our joints, tendons and muscles. This “6th sense” guides momentary reactions to our place in the world.



**Vestibular System**, providing a key sense of postural reflexes, eye movements and spatial orientation. Our complex inner ear structures and neural pathways perceive head movements and facilitate equilibrium.

As we age, our risk of falls rises. Data shows approximately 67% of emergency room visits for adults 65-85+ are for falls, considered a leading cause of injury-related deaths. Research indicates those with hearing challenges have poorer postural balance, an important factor in standing and walking stability. This may be caused by having **fewer sensory cues** in daily surroundings which help with spatial orientation and hazard avoidance. Further, the shared pathways between hearing and balance-related structures can make it more difficult for older adults to focus reduced attention capacity in safely finding their way.



*These 5 Pearls of Wisdom™ from peer-reviewed research are noteworthy:*

- “National studies suggest that physicians caring for older adults recommended fall screening only 30-37% of the time.<sup>1</sup> This may be due to misconceptions on the time commitment necessary for fall risk screening, a lack of awareness on the subject, or lack of knowledge on fall prevention resources for patient referral.<sup>2</sup>
- “However, the strongest single risk factor for fracture is falling and not osteoporosis.<sup>3</sup>
- The magnitude of the association of hearing loss with falls is clinically significant, with a 25-dB hearing loss (equivalent from going from normal to mild hearing loss) being associated with a nearly 3-fold increased odds of reporting a fall over the preceding year.<sup>4</sup>
- “In summary, it is time to shift the focus in fracture prevention from osteoporosis to falls. Falling is an under-recognized risk factor for fracture, it is preventable and prevention provides additional health benefits beyond avoiding fractures.”<sup>5</sup>
- Poor hearing may increase the risk for falls and injuries, thus having a direct effect on disability. Primary and secondary prevention of hearing loss should be a priority when aiming to promote health and well-being among older people.<sup>6</sup>

1 Hayden S, Luper K., Caldwell E., et al. 2004. Strengths and Needs Assessment of Older Adults in the Denver Metro Area. Technical Report, National Research Center, Boulder, CO.

2 Jones TS, Ghosh TS, Horn K, et al. Primary care physicians perceptions and practices regarding fall prevention in adults 65 years and over. *Accid Anal Prev* 2011;43(5):1605-9.

3 Jarvinen TL, Sievanen H, Khan KM, et al. Shifting the focus in fracture prevention from osteoporosis to falls. *BMJ* 2008;336(7636):124-6.

4 Lin FR, Ferrucci L. Hearing loss and falls among older adults in the United States. *Arch Intern Med* 2012;172(4): 369-71.

5 Jarvinen TL, Sievanen H, Khan KM, et al. Shifting the focus in fracture prevention from osteoporosis to falls. *BMJ* 2008;336(7636):124-6.

6 Viljanen A, Kaprio J, Pyykko I, et al. Hearing as a predictor of falls and postural balance in older female twins. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci* 2009;64(2):312-7.



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Please invest a few minutes to share his experience, with this excerpt as preview:

*“He learned how hearing and vestibular or balance systems were functionally related. With proper hearing prescription, his walking stability could improve and sensory cues in daily surroundings reclaimed. As a physical fitness advocate, the ‘use it or lose it’ hearing analogy helped him understand the more you use hearing ‘muscles’ the stronger and more effective they can be.”*

While we take your hearing care seriously,  
a little laughter goes a long way.

**Good Humor, Healthy Hearing**



## Home Safety Checklist



*While hearing your best may reduce the risk of falls, here are helpful steps to make your home, the most likely place for falls, safer:*

**Clear your floor.** Remove clutter, small furniture, pet gear, electrical cords, throw rugs and anything else that might cause someone to trip.

**Arrange or remove furniture** so there is plenty of room for walking.

**Put essential items** where they are easy to reach.

**Add grab bars** inside and outside of your bathtub or shower and next to the toilet.

**Put railings** on both sides of the stairs, and make sure stairs and hallways have good lighting.

**Make sure outdoor areas are well lit** and walkways are smooth and free of puddles and ice.

**Use a cane** or walker if necessary.

Reference source: <https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/safety-topics/older-adult-falls>

It is sensible for you and your loved ones to consistently get professional hearing tests. While many things in life surprise us, we know hearing your best may help reduce the risk of falls. To help **keep life in balance**, please schedule an appointment at your soonest convenience. Trips are for fun travels, not dangerous incidents.

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LEARN MORE

Schedule an appointment for you or your loved ones.  
**(352) 674-1799**



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**Audiology Department**

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