

## Balance Problems

Balance problems make it difficult for people to maintain stable and upright positions when standing, walking, and even sitting. Older people are at a higher risk of having balance problems. Balance problems occur when 1 or more of 4 systems in the body are not working properly:

- Vision
- Inner ear
- Muscular system
- Awareness of one's own body position (called "proprioception")

A range of factors can cause balance problems, including:

- Muscle weakness
- Joint stiffness
- Inner ear problems
- Simple aging
- Certain medications (such as those prescribed for depression and high blood pressure)
- Lack of activity or a sedentary lifestyle

Balance problems can also be caused by medical conditions, such as:

- Stroke
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Brain injury
- Arthritis
- Spinal cord injury
- Cognitive diseases
- Diabetes

### HOW A PHYSICAL THERAPIST CAN HELP

Your physical therapist can help treat your balance problems by identifying their causes, and designing an individual treatment program to address your specific needs, including exercises you can do at home. Your physical therapist can help you:

- Reduce fall risk
- Reduce fear of falling
- Improve mobility
- Improve balance
- Improve strength
- Improve movement
- Improve flexibility and posture
- Increase activity levels



**75%**  
of Americans older  
than **70 years** are  
diagnosed as having  
"abnormal" balance.

Balance problems  
increase by almost  
**30%**  
in people age **80  
years** or more.