

FACT SHEET



# Superior Canal Dehiscence

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## *What is Superior Canal Dehiscence (SCD)?*

SCD results from an abnormal opening of the bone on top of the superior canal of the inner ear. The opening lets sound and pressure changes influence the inner ear. This means that you may have vertigo and dizziness with loud noises or any activity that causes a pressure change inside of the ear. Other symptoms may include sensitivity to your heartbeat in your ear, echoing of your voice, ringing in your ears, pressure in your ears, hearing loss, and being off balance and unsteady.

The following activities may bring on symptoms: lifting (every day items or weights), straining, bending over, popping ears, nose blowing, air travel, elevators, scuba diving, loud noises, coughing, and sneezing.

## *How is a Diagnosis Made?*

Many tests at a physician's office can be used to help diagnose SCD, including having a special hearing test. After these tests, you may be sent for CT imaging.

## *What is the Treatment for SCD?*

SCD will probably not heal by itself, so you will have two choices: surgery or avoiding the activities that make you dizzy. Avoiding certain activities can be a good option, unless you are debilitated by your symptoms. In that case, surgical plugging of the canal may decrease or get rid of your symptoms. Medicine can reduce symptoms; however this is usually not as helpful. Special ear plugs may also help with your symptoms. You should talk with your physician about medical and surgical options available to you.

## *How can Physical Therapy (PT) Help?*

Since SCD is caused by a bone problem, PT cannot heal SCD, or stop the associated dizziness and vertigo. PT can improve your balance, unsteadiness, and difficulties with walking. A physical therapist can also advise you about ways to avoid activities that bring on your vertigo and dizziness.



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