

Vestibular Dysfunction and Dizziness in the General Population

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Fact Sheet

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How common are dizziness and vestibular dysfunction?

The overall prevalence of vestibular dysfunction in the United States population aged 40 years and older is 35.4%, corresponding to 69 million Americans.¹ Individuals with vestibular dysfunction appear to have an eight-fold increase in their odds of falling.¹ Given the functional consequences and high cost associated with falls, it is important that physicians screen for vestibular dysfunction and refer to physical therapy for vestibular rehabilitation, if indicated. The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (2001-2004) reported that the prevalence of vestibular dysfunction increases with age. Other groups of individuals with an increased risk for vestibular dysfunction are those with less than a high school education, people with diabetes (70% higher), and individuals with hearing loss.¹

What is the burden of dizziness and vestibular dysfunction in the community?

Forty-five percent of individuals who seek medical care for complaints of dizziness have vestibular dysfunction.² Vestibular-related dizziness is associated with interruption of daily activities, sick leave from work, and avoidance of leaving the house when compared to non-vestibular causes of dizziness.³ Patients who complain of dizziness are not routinely screened for vestibular involvement, and therefore not often referred for vestibular rehabilitation.⁴ Vestibular rehabilitation by a physical therapist is an effective treatment for symptoms of dizziness and imbalance related to vestibular hypofunction, benign paroxysmal positional vertigo, and other vestibular-related diagnoses.⁵

References:

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