



# BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

## Getting a Grasp on Balance Disorders

A balance disorder is a condition that makes you feel unsteady or dizzy. If you are standing, sitting, or lying down, you might feel as if you are moving, spinning, or floating. If you are walking, you might suddenly feel as if you are tipping over.

Everyone has a dizzy spell now and then, but the term “dizziness” can mean different things to different people. For one person, dizziness might mean a fleeting feeling of faintness, while for another it could be an intense sensation of spinning (vertigo) that lasts a long time.

Experts believe that more than four out of 10 Americans, sometime in their lives, will experience an episode of dizziness significant enough to send them to a doctor. Balance disorders can be caused by certain health conditions, medications, or a problem in the inner ear or the brain. A balance disorder can profoundly impact daily activities and cause psychological and emotional hardship.

### What are the symptoms of a balance disorder?

If you have a balance disorder, you may stagger when you try to walk, or teeter or fall when you try to stand up. You might experience other symptoms such as:

- Dizziness or vertigo (a spinning sensation)
- Falling or feeling as if you are going to fall
- Lightheadedness, faintness, or a floating sensation
- Blurred vision
- Confusion or disorientation

Other symptoms might include nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, changes in heart rate and blood pressure, and fear, anxiety, or panic. Symptoms may come and go over short time periods or last for a long time, and can lead to fatigue and depression.



*Next Page*  
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*Continued from previous page*

## What causes balance disorders?

There are many causes of balance problems, such as medications, ear infections, a head injury, or anything else that affects the inner ear or brain. Low blood pressure can lead to dizziness when you stand up too quickly. Problems that affect the skeletal or visual systems, such as arthritis or eye muscle imbalance, can also cause balance disorders. Your risk of having balance problems increases as you get older.

Unfortunately, many balance disorders start suddenly and with no obvious cause.

## How are balance disorders diagnosed?

Diagnosis of a balance disorder is difficult. To find out if you have a balance problem, your doctor may suggest that you see an otolaryngologist. An otolaryngologist is a physician and surgeon who specializes in diseases and disorders of the ear, nose, neck, and throat.

The otolaryngologist may ask you to have a hearing examination, blood tests, an electronystagmogram (a test that measures eye movements and the muscles that control them), or imaging studies of your head and brain. Another possible test is called posturography. For this test, you stand on a special movable platform in front of a patterned screen. The doctor measures how your body responds to movement of the platform, the patterned screen, or both.

## How are balance disorders treated?

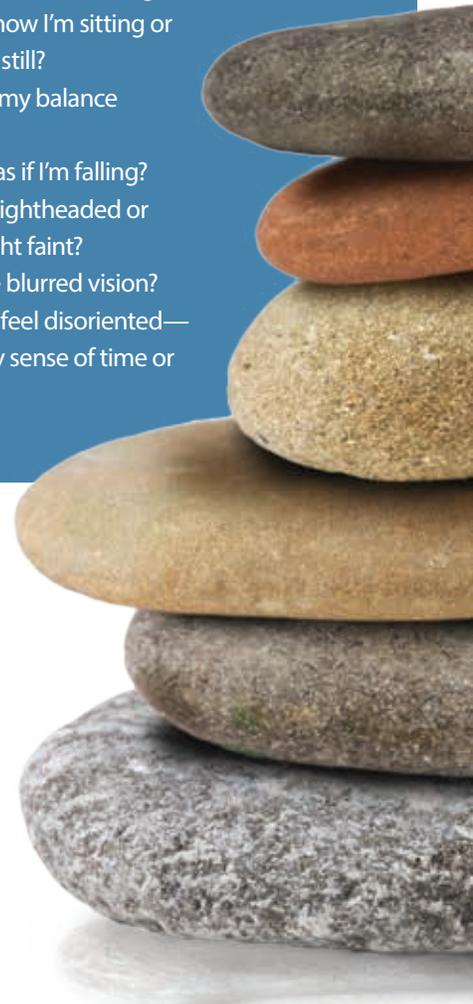
The first thing a doctor will do if you have a balance problem is determine if another health condition or a medication is to blame. If so, your doctor will treat the condition, suggest a different medication, or refer you to a specialist if the condition is outside his or her expertise.

If you have BPPV, your doctor might recommend a series of simple movements, such as the Epley maneuver, which can help dislodge the otoconia from the semicircular canal. In many cases, one session works; other people need the procedure several times to relieve their dizziness.

## When should I seek help if I think I have a balance disorder?

To help you decide whether to seek medical help for a dizzy spell, ask yourself the following questions. If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, talk to your doctor:

- Do I feel unsteady?
- Do I feel as if the room is spinning around me?
- Do I feel as if I'm moving when I know I'm sitting or standing still?
- Do I lose my balance and fall?
- Do I feel as if I'm falling?
- Do I feel lightheaded or as if I might faint?
- Do I have blurred vision?
- Do I ever feel disoriented—losing my sense of time or location?





# DayInDayOut

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

## Keeping Tabs on Calcium



The foods we eat contain a variety of vitamins, minerals, and other important nutrients that help keep our bodies healthy. Two nutrients in particular, calcium and vitamin D, are needed for strong bones.

Calcium is needed for our heart, muscles, and nerves to function properly and for blood to clot. Inadequate calcium significantly contributes to the development of osteoporosis. Many published studies show that low calcium intake throughout life is associated with low bone mass and high fracture rates. National nutrition surveys have shown that most people are not getting the calcium they need to grow and maintain healthy bones.

### How Much do I Need?

It's recommended that most adults (19 to 50 years of age) get 1,000 mg of calcium a day through the foods they eat or via a supplement. If you're older, your calcium needs may be higher than 1,000 mg a day. Talk to your health care provider if you have questions about your daily calcium recommendation.

### Calcium Culprits

Although a balanced diet aids calcium absorption, high levels of protein and sodium (salt) in the diet are thought to increase calcium excretion through the kidneys. Excessive amounts of these substances should be avoided, especially in those with low calcium intake.



THE AVERAGE (ADULT)  
PERSON NEEDS  
**1,000 mg**  
OF CALCIUM A DAY

*Next Page*  
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# Day In Day Out

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

*Continued from previous page*

Lactose intolerance also can lead to inadequate calcium intake. Those who are lactose intolerant have insufficient amounts of the enzyme lactase, which is needed to break down the lactose found in dairy products. To include dairy products in the diet, dairy foods can be taken in small quantities or treated with lactase drops, or lactase can be taken as a pill. Some milk products on the market already have been treated with lactase.

## Calcium Supplements

If you have trouble getting enough calcium in your diet, you may need to take a calcium supplement. The amount of calcium you will need from a supplement depends on how much calcium you obtain from food sources. There are several different calcium compounds from which to choose, such as calcium carbonate and calcium citrate, among others. Except in people with gastrointestinal disease, all major forms of calcium supplements are absorbed equally well when taken with food.

Calcium supplements are better absorbed when taken in small doses (500 mg or less) several times throughout the day. In many individuals, calcium supplements are better absorbed when taken with food. It is important to check supplement labels to ensure that the product meets United States Pharmacopeia (USP) standards.

## Vitamin D

The body needs vitamin D to absorb calcium. Without enough vitamin D, one can't form enough of the hormone calcitriol (known as the "active vitamin D"). This in turn leads to insufficient calcium absorption from the diet. In this situation, the body must take calcium from its stores in the skeleton, which weakens existing bone and prevents the formation of strong, new bone.

You can get vitamin D in three ways: through the skin, from the diet, and from supplements. Experts recommend a daily intake of 600 IU (International Units) of vitamin D up to age 70. Men and women over age 70 should increase their uptake

to 800 IU daily, which also can be obtained from supplements or vitamin D-rich foods such as egg yolks, saltwater fish, liver, and fortified milk. The Institute of Medicine recommends no more than 4,000 IU per day for adults. However, sometimes doctors prescribe higher doses for people who are deficient in vitamin D.

## A Complete Osteoporosis Program

Remember, a balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is only one part of an osteoporosis prevention or treatment program. Like exercise, getting enough calcium is a strategy that helps strengthen bones at any age. But these strategies may not be enough to stop bone loss caused by lifestyle, medications, or menopause. Your doctor can determine the need for an osteoporosis medication in addition to diet and exercise.





# TakeCharge

WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN

## Shedding Some Light on Depression

Depression not only affects your brain and behavior—it affects your entire body. Depression has been linked with other health problems, including heart disease. Dealing with more than one health problem at a time can be difficult, so proper treatment is important.

### What is depression?

Major depressive disorder, or depression, is a serious mental illness. Depression interferes with your daily life and routine and reduces your quality of life. About 6.7 percent of U.S. adults ages 18 and older have depression.

### Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- › Ongoing sad, anxious, or empty feelings
- › Feeling hopeless
- › Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
- › Feeling irritable or restless
- › Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once enjoyable, including sex
- › Feeling tired all the time

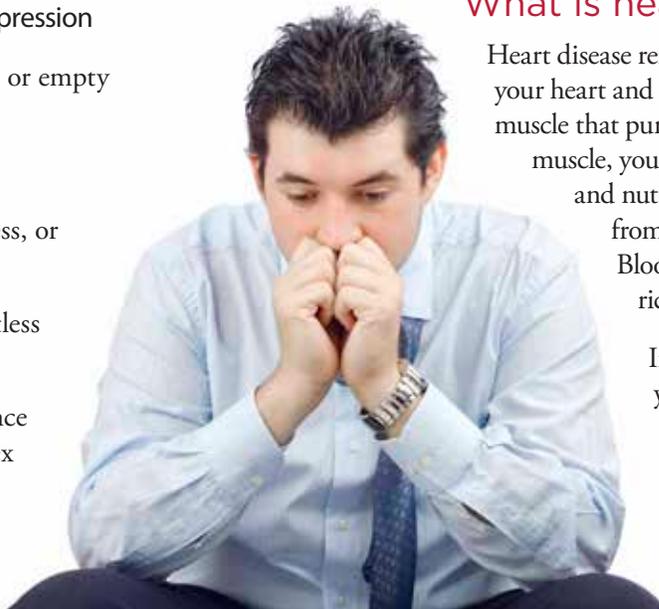
- › Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions
- › Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, a condition called insomnia, or sleeping all the time
- › Overeating or loss of appetite
- › Thoughts of death and suicide or suicide attempts
- › Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease with treatment.

### What is heart disease?

Heart disease refers to a number of illnesses that affect your heart and nearby blood vessels. Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood through your body. Like any muscle, your heart needs a constant supply of oxygen and nutrients, which it gets from blood pumped from the lungs and other parts of the body. Blood vessels carry this oxygen- and nutrient-rich blood to the heart.

If not enough blood reaches your heart, you may feel a pain in your chest called angina. You may also feel angina pain in the left arm and shoulder, neck, or jaw. You may not always feel angina when your heart is not getting enough blood.

*Next Page*  
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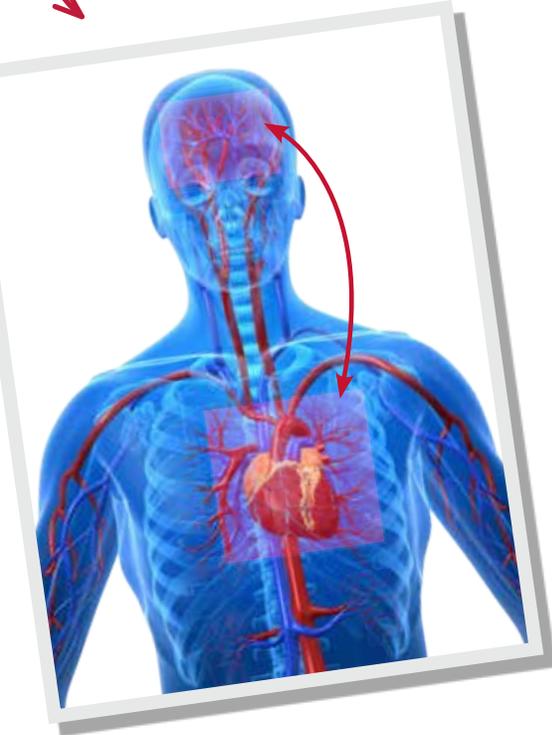




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WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN

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A heart attack occurs when the blood supply to your heart is cut off completely. If blood flow isn't quickly restored, the part of your heart that does not receive oxygen begins to die. While some heart muscle may be permanently damaged, quick treatment can limit the harm and save your life.

## How are depression and heart disease linked?

People with heart disease are more likely to suffer from depression than otherwise healthy people. Angina and heart attacks are closely linked with depression. Researchers are unsure exactly why this occurs. They do know that some symptoms of depression may reduce your overall physical and mental health, increasing your

risk for heart disease or making symptoms of heart disease worse. Fatigue or feelings of worthlessness may cause you to ignore your medication plan and avoid treatment for heart disease. Having depression increases your risk of death after a heart attack.

## How is depression treated in people who have heart disease?

Depression is diagnosed and treated by a health care provider. Treating depression can help you manage heart disease and improve your overall health. Recovery from depression takes time but treatments are effective.

At present, the most common treatments for depression include:

- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a type of psychotherapy, or talk therapy, that helps people change negative thinking styles and behaviors that may contribute to their depression
- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), a type of antidepressant medication that includes citalopram (Celexa), sertraline (Zoloft), and fluoxetine (Prozac)
- Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI), a type of antidepressant medication similar to SSRI that includes venlafaxine (Effexor) and duloxetine (Cymbalta).

While currently available depression treatments are generally well tolerated and safe, talk with your health care

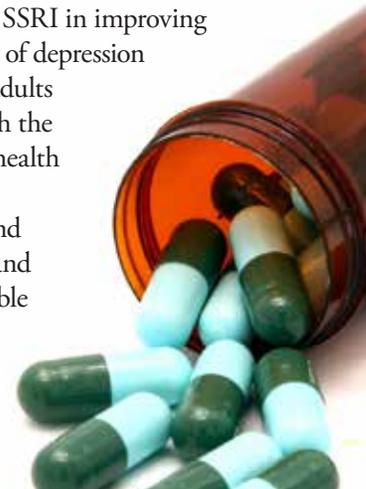
provider about side effects, possible drug interactions, and other treatment options. Not everyone responds to treatment the same way. Medications can take several weeks to work, may need to be combined with ongoing talk therapy, or may need to be changed or adjusted to minimize side effects and achieve the best results.

Treating your depression may make it easier for you to follow a long-term heart disease treatment plan and make the lifestyle changes required to manage your heart disease, including:

- Eating healthy foods
- Exercising regularly
- Drinking less alcohol, or none at all
- Quitting smoking

Some people may also need to take heart medications or have surgery to treat heart disease.

Regular exercise not only protects you against heart disease, it may also help reduce depression. One study found that an exercise training program was as effective as an SSRI in improving the symptoms of depression among older adults diagnosed with the disease. Your health care provider can recommend safe exercises and activities suitable for you.





# ToYourHealth

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN



## AM I AT RISK FOR Type 2 Diabetes & Pre-Diabetes?

An estimated 86 million Americans have pre-diabetes and are more likely to go on to develop diabetes within 10 years.

Nearly 29.1 million Americans have diabetes, a serious disease in which blood glucose (blood sugar) levels are above normal. Most people with diabetes have type 2, which used to be called adult-onset diabetes. At one time, type 2 diabetes was more common in people over age 45. But now more young people, even children, have the disease because many are overweight or obese.

Diabetes can lead to problems such as heart disease, stroke, vision loss, kidney disease, and nerve damage. One out of four people do not know they have diabetes. Many people do not find out they have diabetes until they are faced with problems such as blurry vision or heart trouble. That's why you need to know if you are at risk for diabetes.

### What is pre-diabetes?

At least 86 million Americans over age 20 have pre-diabetes. Before people develop type 2 diabetes, they usually have “pre-diabetes”—that means their blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not yet high enough to be called diabetes. People with pre-diabetes have an increased chance of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.

There are many factors that increase your risk for diabetes.

There are many factors that increase your risk for diabetes. To find out about your risk, check each item that applies to you.

- I am 45 years of age or older.
- I have a parent, brother, or sister with diabetes.

- My family background is African American, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander.
- I have had diabetes while I was pregnant (this is called gestational diabetes) or I gave birth to a baby weighing 9 pounds or more.
- I have been told that my glucose levels are higher than normal.
- My blood pressure is 140/90 or higher, or I have been told that I have high blood pressure.
- My cholesterol (lipid) levels are not normal. My HDL cholesterol (“good” cholesterol) is less than 35 or my triglyceride level is higher than 250.

*Next Page*  
↓



# To Your Health

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

*Continued from previous page*

- I am fairly inactive. I am physically active less than three times a week.
- I have been told that I have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).
- The skin around my neck or in my armpits appears dirty no matter how much I scrub it. The skin appears dark, thick and velvety.
- I have been told that I have blood vessel problems affecting my heart, brain, or legs.

## Small Steps to a Healthy Diet

A healthy diet is critical when it comes to managing and preventing type 2 diabetes. Take these small steps to eat healthy.

### A healthy eating plan is one that:

- Highlights eating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk, and milk products.
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts.
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars.



### Keep these healthy eating tips in mind:

- Try not to exceed the amount of calories and fat grams that you need on a daily basis.
- Try to eat meals and snacks at regular times every day.
- Make less food look like more by serving your meals on a smaller plate.
- Chew sugar-free gum between meals to help cut down on snacking.

Additionally, take your time when you eat. It takes about 20 minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that you are full. Also, try to limit your alcoholic beverage intake. If you drink alcohol, choose light beer and avoid mixed drinks.

