

FALLING IN THE ELDERLY

- Every year, one-third to one-half of the population age 65 and over experience falls.
- One third of the population age 65 and over reports some difficulty with balance or ambulation; this increases in frequency and severity in the over age 75 population.
- Falls are a leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries in older adults.
- In 2000, 1.6 million seniors were treated in emergency departments for fall-related injuries and 353,000 were hospitalized.
- The medical expense related to falls amounts to more than \$20 billion annually in the US, and is projected to climb in to \$32 billion annually by 2020.
- The elderly represent more than one third of all hospital injury admissions, and more than 80% of these injuries are caused by unintentional falls.
- More than 300,000 hospitalizations for hip fractures occur annually in the United States; 86% occur in individuals aged 65 and older.
- Many of the hip fractures sustained in elderly Americans as a result of falls are related to balance disorders.
- Fear of falling negatively impacts postural control, thereby completing a vicious loop.
- Nearly 20% of Americans between the ages of 65 and 75 suffer from balance disorders; by age 75, that figure rises to 25%.
- The elderly seek treatment for dizziness more frequently than for hearing loss.
- Dizziness is reported as the most common complaint for patients over 75 years of age.
- In the elderly, 50% of falls are reported to be the result of vestibular problems.
- Approximately 1/4 to 1/3 of the elderly complain of some form of dizziness.