HEARING

Hearing loss and falls

By Russ L'HommeDieu, DPT, ATP, CFPS · Doctor of Physical Therapy, RESNA Assistive Technology Professional, Certified Fall Prevention Specialist · August 30, 2026



Yes, hearing loss and falls are linked. Hearing loss raises fall risk on its own, apart from age and other health problems. Getting your hearing checked and keeping your hearing aids working are simple steps that belong in every fall prevention plan.

Why your ears matter for balance

Experts think a few things are going on at once:

- **Shared inner ear damage.** Your inner ear handles hearing and also holds part of your balance system (the vestibular system). Damage there can affect both.

- **Listening takes effort.** When you strain to hear, your brain has less attention left for your footing.
- **Less awareness of what is around you.** Sound tells you where things are: footsteps behind you, a dog coming down the hall, a car backing out of a driveway.

Put those together and it is easier to trip, misjudge a step, or get startled off balance.

Hearing belongs in fall screening

In 2025, the American Geriatrics Society recommended that the CDC add hearing to its STEADI fall prevention program, along with cognition and bladder health. The 2022 World Falls Guidelines also list hearing among the things to check and treat in people at high risk.

That means it is fair to ask your doctor about hearing at your yearly visit. Medicare's Annual Wellness Visit includes a review of functional ability and safety, which covers fall risk screening, with no cost sharing.

Getting checked

Hearing checks can be quick:

- **Whisper test:** a quick office check of how well you hear a whisper.
- **hearWHO app:** a hearing check app from the World Health Organization.
- **Audiology referral:** if either screen raises a concern, a full hearing test with an audiologist is the next step.

If your parent keeps saying "What?" or turns the TV up loud, those are good reasons to book a check.

Keep hearing aids working, and wear them

Hearing aids only help when they are in and working.

- Wear them when you are up and moving, not just for TV or phone calls. Hospitals tell older patients to wear their glasses and working hearing aids whenever they are up.
- Keep fresh batteries on hand. Rechargeable models avoid battery changes, which helps if small batteries are hard to handle.

- Most people take hearing aids out at bedtime, so make sure the night route to the bathroom is well lit. See How do I prevent falls at night?

Don't rush to the door or the phone

When you notice the doorbell or phone late, it is tempting to hurry. Rushing is a fall risk on its own, and it is worse on stairs.

- **Keep a phone on your body,** not across the room, so you never have to dash for it. It also means you can call for help after a fall.
- **Let it ring.** Callers can leave a message. Never rush down stairs to answer.
- **Consider simple technology.** Video doorbells and smart speakers can cut down on rushing to the door. Technology is optional, and it never replaces a person checking in.
- **Stop to talk.** Walking while talking splits your attention. Pause, face the person, and then keep going.

When hearing changes come with dizziness

Because hearing and balance share the inner ear, some problems affect both. If a hearing change comes with dizziness, a spinning feeling, or new unsteadiness, tell your doctor. A physical therapist trained in vestibular (inner ear) problems can often help with balance and dizziness. The Vestibular Disorders Association has patient information.

For adult children

Hearing loss can quietly pull a parent away from activities, friends, and exercise. Less activity means weaker legs and poorer balance, which raises fall risk again. Helping your parent get tested, keep aids charged, and stay social is fall prevention too. Regular check-in calls from family or neighbors help too.

How Home Safety Solutions can help

An in-home safety visit looks at how your parent hears and responds at home: the doorbell, the phone, the night route, and the stairs. We suggest practical changes and note what to share with the doctor or audiologist. Learn what happens during a home safety visit. Call (813) 365-9171 or email info@homesafety.solutions.

Related reading: Keeping veterans safe at home with smart technology · How can I check on a parent's safety from another state? · Vestibular Disorders Association · NCOA Falls Free CheckUp · Is it normal to fall as you get older?

This article is general education, not medical advice. Talk with your doctor, pharmacist, or therapist about your own situation.

Want a plan for your own home?

Every service starts with an Initial Consultation, a 30-minute phone call with Dr. L'HommeDieu.
Book at homesafety.solutions