



Understanding and Treating the Brain Changes That Affect Coordination

by ANGELA FINLAY

Injury Prevention

An unsteady gait may mean nothing, but it could also have a profound impact on your health. Problems with balance are often the first indicators of Alzheimer's disease, and they continue to cause problems as the disease progresses. Although there is no cure for Alzheimer's or its symptoms, there are some ways to counteract some of the challenges to coordination, and engage in injury prevention.

How Alzheimer's Interferes With Balance

Tissue damage. Although Alzheimer's is often seen as a mental affliction, it causes permanent physical damage in the brain. As the disease progresses, it destroys the neurons and disrupts the important messages that control movement, coordination and thought. When the disease moves from a mild to a moderate stage, a person begins to lose a sense of where their body is in relation to other objects, which can result in more stumbles.

Medication. Certain medications can bring on vision changes, dizziness, drowsiness, and other symptoms that impact balance. Often, the problem can be traced to the combination of different drugs, especially for older people, whose bodies break down and absorb medications differently. So, while the drugs you take for Alzheimer's symptoms may not directly threaten your balance, the way they interact with your other medications can result in problems with coordination.

Lack of exercise. As people age or deal with a chronic illness, they tend to become less active. With less activity, stabil

range of motion or severe coordination problems, since the buoyancy allows for Water is also soothing and calming, which makes exercise easier to enjoy and even more therapeutic.

- **Video routines.** Some recent studies have focused on how video games (such as Wii fit) could help Alzheimer's patients stay in shape and improve balance. Along with certain accessories – like a weighted balance board – the interactive exercise routine can to keep patients engaged, and therefore more likely to complete each session and gradually build strength and coordination.

In order to make sure the exercise routine is appropriate, work with a physiotherapist who knows about the effects and progression of Alzheimer's. The plan may need to be adjusted periodically, since certain exercises or the frequency of workouts may not be suited to later stages of the disease.