

PREVENTING INJURIES AMONG OLDER ADULTS

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Injuries among older adults include injuries from falls, motor vehicle-related injuries, suicide, and elder abuse.
- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- In 2000, medical expenditures to treat injuries for people age 65 years or older were over \$29 billion.
- Nearly 7,500 adults ages 65 years or older die, and an estimated 259,500 suffer nonfatal injuries in motor vehicle crashes each year. The numbers are increasing. Older drivers have higher crash fatality rates than all but teenage drivers.
- In 2001, over 5,000 adults age 65 or older died by suicide.
- In 1998, the National Elder Abuse Incidence Study reported over 550,000 incidents of abuse among the elderly.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

CDC funds the National Resource Center on Safe Aging (NRCSA), a joint effort between the Center on Aging at San Diego State University and the American Society on Aging, which provides information about injury prevention among older adults to public health professionals, senior service providers, and others through its website (www.afeaging.org). NRCSA provides information about both intentional and unintentional injuries, focusing on falls, pedestrian injuries, fires, and elder abuse.

CDC distributed more than 6,000 copies of its *Tool Kit to Prevent Senior Falls*, a comprehensive collection of research findings, materials, and tools, in English and Spanish, to fall prevention programs. Much remains to be learned about fall-related risk factors and how falls occur. In an effort to better understand these factors, CDC is supporting the expansion of the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. This surveillance system will collect information about fall injuries from hospital emergency departments.

CDC also monitors trends in motor vehicle-related injuries among adults ages 65 or older and conducts research on the risk factors for this age group. Analysis of fatality data shows that older adult drivers were less likely than drivers 16 to 34 years of age to be involved in crashes where someone else died.

Example of Program in Action

Using CDC funding, the California State Health Department is studying a fall prevention demonstration program for older adults. This is the first state-level program to include home modification, medication review, and exercises that increase strength and balance. Additionally, CDC is funding state health departments in Michigan and Washington to develop, implement, and evaluate fall prevention programs. CDC has also awarded funds to the University of Iowa to evaluate the implementation and impact of state adult protective service statutes and regulations on the conduct of elder abuse investigations and outcomes.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The next steps are to identify effective, science-based interventions; translate these interventions into programs; implement programs in community settings; and evaluate programs, document outcomes, and provide information that allows communities to tailor programs to serve their specific needs.