

FACTS

preventing falls among older adults

THE REALITY

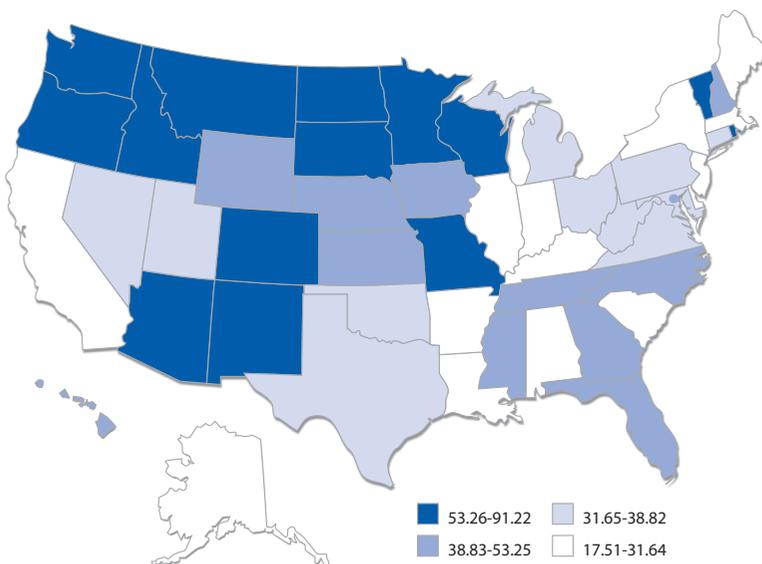
- > Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths among adults age 65 and older.
- > One in three Americans age 65 and older falls each year.
- > In 2007, approximately 1.9 million older adults were treated in hospital emergency departments for fall-related injuries, and about 491,500 were subsequently hospitalized.
- > Older adults may voluntarily restrict their activities due to a fear of falling, which in turn increases their risk of falling.
- > Older adults are the fastest growing segment of our population. The age 65 and over population will increase from 35 million in 2000 to 55 million in 2020.



COSTS AND LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

- > The total cost of fall-related injuries for adults aged 65 and older is \$80.9 billion, including more than \$19 billion in direct medical costs.
- > The average hospital cost for a fall-related injury is \$17,086.
- > Fractures were over one-third of non-fatal fall injuries and made up 61% of costs – approximately \$12 billion.
- > Women made up 58% of older adults in 2000, and their medical costs due to falls were two to three times higher than for men.

AGE-ADJUSTED UNINTENTIONAL FALL-RELATED INJURY DEATH RATES FOR PERSONS AGES 65 YEARS AND OLDER, UNITED STATES (2002-2006)



Deaths per 100,000 population, by quartiles.
Data Source: National Vital Statistics System.

FACT FACT

Death rates from injuries resulting from falls are higher for men, however women are more likely than men to sustain non-fatal injuries from falls, especially hip fractures. This may be due to the fact that osteoporosis is more prevalent among women.



preventing falls among older adults

FACTS

PROGRAMS IN ACTION

The Oregon Research Institute conducted a study of a Tai Chi fall intervention. At the end of six months, the risk of multiple falls in the Tai Chi participants was 55% lower. In October 2005, the CDC Injury Center funded the Oregon Research Institute to translate this intervention into a community-based program. The program, called *Moving for Better Balance*, has been developed for adults aged 60 and over and is being conducted in senior centers in Oregon.

One-hour classes are offered twice a week for 12 weeks and participants learn eight forms, or body-movement exercises. Twelve weeks after the program ends, participants are contacted to find out if they are continuing to practice Tai Chi.

Based on feedback from the senior centers and program participants, the Oregon Research Institute is developing an evidence-based fall prevention program for older adults that can be implemented in a community setting.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Older adults can take several steps to reduce their risk of falling. They can:

- > Exercise regularly; exercise programs like Tai Chi that increase strength and improve balance are especially good.
- > Ask their doctor or pharmacist to review their medicines—both prescription and over-the-counter—to reduce side effects and interactions that may increase the risk of falls.
- > Have their vision checked by an eye doctor at least once a year.
- > Improve the lighting in their home.
- > Reduce hazards in their homes that can lead to falls (e.g., remove clutter, use double-sided tape to keep small rugs from slipping, etc.)



RESEARCH AND PROMISING PRACTICES

- > To help organizations translate interventions into community-based fall prevention programs, CDC developed a companion to their publication, *Compendium of Effective Community-Based Interventions*. The companion describes how to use education, exercise, medication assessment, vision improvement, and home modification to develop effective prevention programs. Equipped with these tools and ongoing surveillance, a number of states are making significant progress in fall prevention.
- > *Sure Step*, a one-on-one fall intervention that can be conducted by a registered nurse or physical therapist, was developed through collaborative efforts between the University of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, and Kenosha County. *Sure Step* has been found to effectively reduce falls in a subset of high-risk older adults. Results to date have shown a 68% reduction in falls within six months of being implemented.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the population. As the risk of falling increases with age, falls and a fear of falling can keep older adults from living independent, productive, and healthy lives. The good news is that falls are preventable. There are opportunities to:

- > Support community-based falls prevention programs designed for older adults who are at high risk of falling.
- > Improve understanding of the most effective strategies for reducing falls and their associated health care costs.
- > Continue efforts to identify the risk factors and long-term outcomes of falls and develop programs to address these issues.
- > Increase awareness of the problem among older adults, family members, caregivers, and others involved with older adults.
- > Increase resources available for programs and research that will reduce falls and fall-related injuries and deaths among older adults.



CONTACT CDC
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC)
Call: 1.800.CDC-INFO (232-4636) | TTY: 1.888.232.6348

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND DATA SOURCES
www.cdc.gov/injury



Developed by the State and Territorial Injury
Prevention Directors Association (STIPDA)
www.stipda.org