

# OLDER ADULT FALLS: A GROWING DANGER

## The Concern:

Every second an older American falls. These falls threaten the health and independence of older adults and result in high medical costs across the U.S. healthcare system.

IN 2014:



**1 in 4** older adults reported a fall.



More than **7 MILLION** of those falls required medical treatment or restricted activity for at least a day.

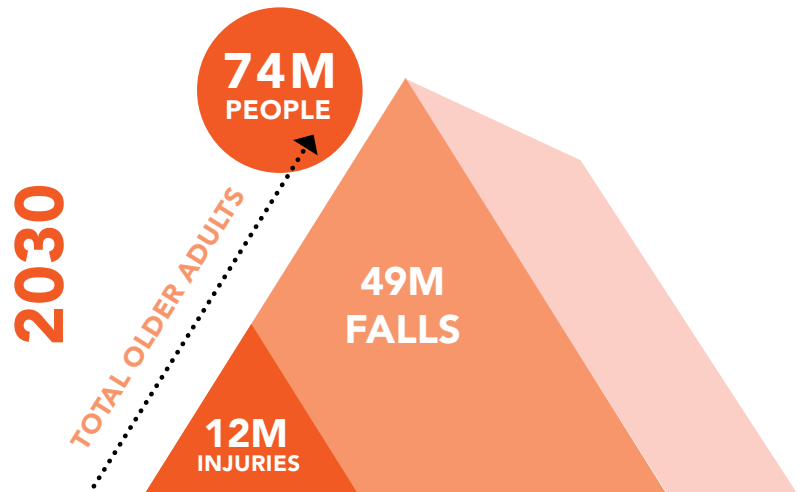
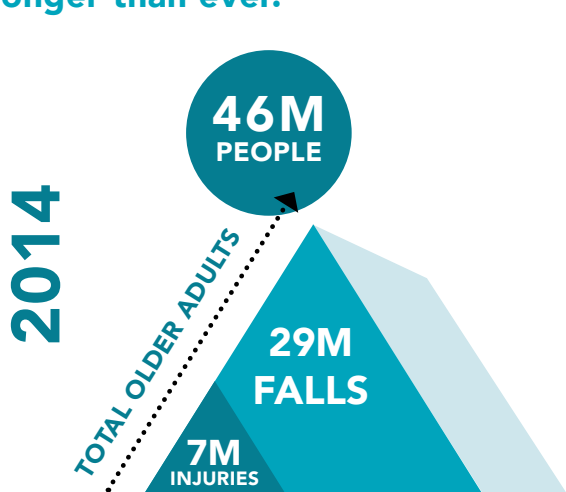


More than **27,000** older adults died as a result of falls—that's 74 older adults every day.

## A Growing Burden:

Over 10,000 people in the U.S. turn 65 every day and Americans are living longer than ever.

Falls and fall injuries are increasing in the U.S. Annual medical expenses for older adult falls cost over **\$31 billion**, these costs will surge unless preventive measures are adopted.

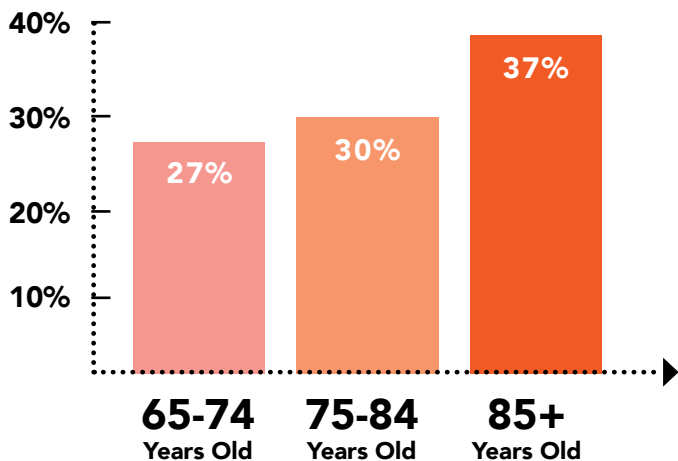


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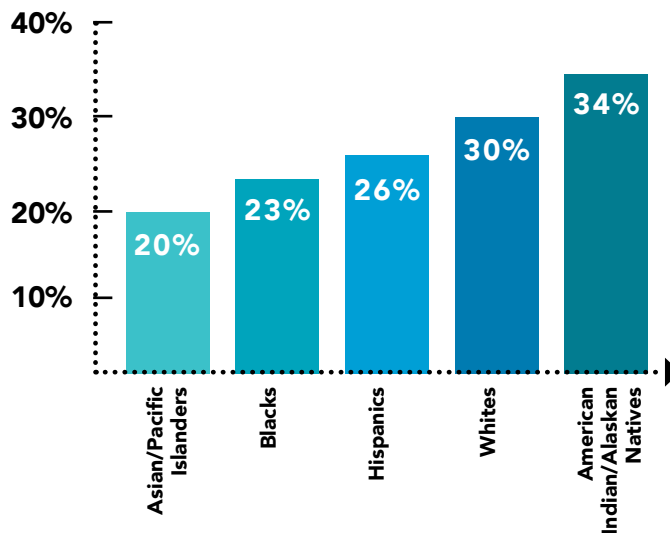
## Who is at Risk?

While the percent of older adults who fall varies by location and demographics, **all older adults are at risk for a fall.**

### Falls Increase with Age:\*

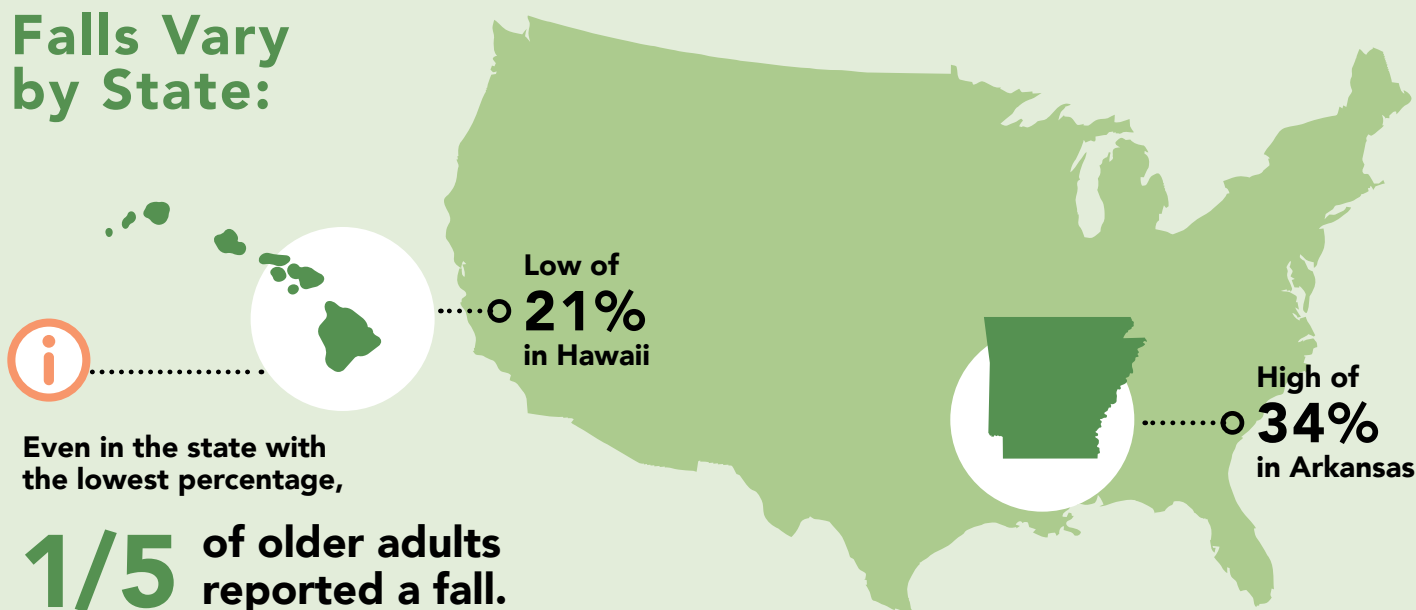


### Falls Vary by Race and Ethnicity:\*



\* Percent of older adults who reported a fall

### Falls Vary by State:



## What Can Be Done?

Falls aren't just a normal part of aging—they are preventable. Screening and effective strategies can save lives and money.



### A Preventable Problem:

CDC, healthcare providers, and older adults and their caretakers can work together to reduce these devastating injuries.

1.

### CDC:

- Developed the STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries) initiative to help healthcare providers incorporate fall prevention into routine care for older adults. STEADI includes
  - screening tools,
  - educational materials and resources, and
  - online trainings.
- Worked with healthcare partners and electronic health record (EHR) vendors to integrate the STEADI materials and resources into EHR modules. The modules prompt clinicians to screen for falls risk, review medications, and recommend vitamin D.
- Continues to track the nation's progress in addressing older adult falls



### Did You Know?

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**CDC funded health department and health system partnerships to implement STEADI into their primary care practices. For example, in Oregon and New York clinical practices:**

- Before STEADI, clinicians rarely talked to their older adult patients about falls.
- After STEADI, clinicians screened and assessed 50-65% of their older patients for falls risks.

## 2. HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS:

- Identify patients who are at risk, identify modifiable risk factors, and offer effective fall strategies.
- Talk to older patients about falls using these three initial steps.
  1. **Screen for fall risk** using these three questions:
    - Have you fallen in the past year?
    - Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking?
    - Do you worry about falling?
  2. **Review and manage** medications linked to falls.
  3. **Recommend vitamin D** for improved bone, muscle, and nerve health.

## 3. OLDER ADULTS & CAREGIVERS:

### Reduce the risk of falling and stay independent longer:

- **Speak up.** Talk to their doctor about fall risks and prevention. Tell their doctor right away if they have fallen, or if they're afraid they might fall, or if they feel unsteady.
- **Keep moving.** Activities that strengthen legs and help balance (like Tai Chi) can help prevent falls.
- **Check their eyes.** Have a vision screening once a year and update glasses as needed.
- **Check home safety.** Most falls happen at home.
  - Get rid of hazards. Keep floors clutter free.
  - Remove small rugs or tape down or secure them.
  - Add grab bars in the bathroom.
  - Have handrails and lights installed on all staircases.
  - Make sure there is plenty of light.

## STEADI Material For Older Adults:

### Stay Independent Brochure:

[www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/stay\\_independent\\_brochure-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/stay_independent_brochure-a.pdf)

### What You Can Do To Prevent Falls Brochure:

[cdc.gov/steady/pdf/what\\_you\\_can\\_do\\_brochure-a.pdf](http://cdc.gov/steady/pdf/what_you_can_do_brochure-a.pdf)

### Check for Safety Brochure:

[cdc.gov/steady/pdf/check\\_for\\_safety\\_brochure-a.pdf](http://cdc.gov/steady/pdf/check_for_safety_brochure-a.pdf)

## RESOURCES

### Older Adult Falls webpages:

[cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html](http://cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html)

### STEADI Patient Materials:

[cdc.gov/steady/patient.html](http://cdc.gov/steady/patient.html)

### STEADI Initiative:

[cdc.gov/steady](http://cdc.gov/steady)



U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services  
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