



Take a Stand to Prevent Falls in Older Adults

OFFICE OF INJURY & VIOLENCE PREVENTION • FALL PREVENTION PROGRAM • JUNE 2019

Falls in Older Adults

Falls are the **leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries** for older adults in the U.S. and Connecticut. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous personal and economic costs.

A **growing number of older adults fear falling**, and as a result, limit their activities and social life. This can result in further physical decline, depression, social isolation and feelings of helplessness.

Statistics

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH):

- Every 13 seconds, an older American is treated in the emergency department (ED) for a fall. Every 20 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.
- Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death for Connecticut residents 65 years of age and older (65+) and the fourth leading cause for residents of all ages.
- One-third of adults in Connecticut age 65+ years old fall each year. Rate of fall-related injuries per 100,000 population of adults 65+ years old is 5,844.
- Approximately 85.2% of all fall-related deaths and about 30% of fall-related ED visits and hospitalizations occurred in Connecticut residents 65+ years old between 2008 and 2017.
- Falls caused **2,827 deaths** among Connecticut residents 65+ years old from 2008 - 2016.
- Falls resulted in **313,981 emergency department (ED) visits** and **inpatient hospitalizations** for the state's residents 65+ years old, during the same time period.

KEY POINTS:

- Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal traumatic brain injuries for Connecticut residents of all ages;
- Approximately 85.2% of fall-related deaths and about 30% of fall-related ED visits and hospitalizations occur among Connecticut residents 65 years of age and older;
- Consult with a health care professional about getting a fall risk assessment;
- Start or continue a regular exercise program that enhances strength, balance and flexibility.

- **Falls are costly.** Fall-related inpatient hospital charges totaled over \$1.1 billion for state residents 65+ years old from 2008 – 2012.
- There were 64,944 ED visits and hospitalizations for **fall-related concussions** in 65+ year-olds in Connecticut which consisted of 37% of total fall-related concussions between the years 2008 and 2017.

Call to Action – What You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- Ask your doctor or healthcare provider to **evaluate your risk** for falling and talk with them about specific things you can do;
- **A fall risk assessment is required as part of the *Welcome to Medicare* examination.** Your doctor or healthcare provider can receive reimbursement for fall risk assessment through the Medicare Annual Wellness visit;
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to **review your medicines** to see if any might make you dizzy or sleepy or have interactions with your diet or other medicines. This should include over-the-counter medications;
- **Join a regular exercise program**, especially one that increases balance, strength, flexibility and endurance. Contact your local senior center or YMCA or Visiting Nurse Association to locate a falls prevention program in your community;
- Get your **vision and hearing checked** at least once a year. Be sure to update your eyeglasses and hearing aids if needed;
- Make sure you have **proper footwear**; and
- **Make your home safer** by reducing tripping hazards, installing handrails on both sides of stairs, installing grab bars for bathroom shower/bathtub/toilet and improving lighting.

