

Falls and Older Adults

Each year, one in every three adults aged 65 and older falls. Falls can lead to moderate to severe injuries, such as hip fractures and head traumas, and can even increase the risk of early death.

How big is the problem?

- In Connecticut, falls are the leading cause of injury-related death for Connecticut residents aged 65 years and over and the fourth leading cause for all ages.
- Falls resulted in approximately 6,000 inpatient hospital stays and 24,000 emergency room visits among older Connecticut residents each year from 2005 to 2008.
- In addition to being the leading cause of hip fractures among older adults, falls are also the leading cause of traumatic brain injury and a leading cause of earlier admission to a nursing home.
- Costs for hospital stays due to falls for older adults totaled \$273 million from 2005 to 2006, not including the costs of long-term care or rehabilitation.

Many falls can be prevented. Studies show that a combination of measures can significantly reduce the risk of falling, and increasing awareness of the key measures that older adults can take to reduce their risk is important.

The Department of Public Health recommends the following actions to help prevent falls:

- Begin a regular exercise program, especially one that increases balance, strength, and flexibility.
- Consult with a health professional about getting a fall risk assessment.
- Have all medications, prescription and over-the-counter, reviewed periodically for interactions that could lead to falls.
- Get vision checked at least annually by an eye doctor.
- Make your home safer by reducing tripping hazards, installing handrails and grab bars and improving lighting.

During National Public Health Week, April 4-10, 2011, The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is focusing attention on preventing injuries, a leading cause of death and disability for Connecticut residents. The DPH Injury Prevention Program analyzes injury data, provides information and works with a variety of public and private partners on reducing and preventing injuries.