



Falls Prevention Facts

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs.

However, falling is not an inevitable result of aging. Through practical lifestyle adjustments, evidence-based falls prevention programs, and clinical-community partnerships, the number of falls among seniors can be substantially reduced.

The Challenge

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- One in four Americans aged 65+ falls each year.

- Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.
- Falls are the leading cause of fatal injury and the most common cause of nonfatal trauma-related hospital admissions among older adults.
- Falls result in more than 2.8 million injuries treated in emergency departments annually, including over 800,000 hospitalizations and more than 27,000 deaths.
- In 2015, the total cost of fall injuries was \$50 billion. Medicare and Medicaid shouldered 75% of these costs.
- The financial toll for older adult falls is expected to increase as the population ages and may reach \$67.7 billion by 2020.

Falls, with or without injury, also carry a heavy quality of life impact. A growing number of older adults fear falling and, as a result, limit their activities and social engagements. This can result in further physical decline, depression, social isolation, and feelings of helplessness.

NCOA's Role

NCOA leads the National Falls Prevention Resource Center, which supports awareness and educational efforts about falls and promotes evidence-based falls prevention programs and strategies across the nation. The purpose of the center is to:

- Increase public awareness and educate consumers and professionals about the risks of falls and how to prevent falls.

- Support and stimulate the implementation, dissemination, and sustainability of evidence-based falls prevention programs and strategies to reduce the incidence of falls among older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Serve as the national clearinghouse of tools, best practices, and other information on falls and falls prevention.

Falls Free® Initiative

The National Falls Prevention Resource Center leads the Falls Free® Initiative, a national effort to address the growing public health issue of falls, fall-related injuries and deaths. The initiative includes a coalition of over 70 national organizations charged with working toward the progress of one or more of the strategies in the National Action Plan. Members are engaged in disseminating proven falls prevention programs, advocating for funding, and educating older adults about how they can reduce their risk of falling. The initiative also includes a 43-member State Coalition on Falls Prevention Workgroup charged with collaboratively promoting effective strategies to address falls.

The Falls Free® Initiative's work includes:

Falls Free® National Action Plan

In March 2005, NCOA released the landmark evidence-based Falls Free® National Action Plan to prevent falls and fall-related injuries in older adults. The plan was updated in 2015 and continues to serve as a roadmap and catalyst for action. The plan includes goals, strategies and action steps to increase physical mobility, reduce the impact of medications as a falls risk factor, and improve home and environmental safety. The plan also promotes, the expansion and funding of falls risk screening, assessment and evidence-based programs.

National Falls Prevention Awareness Day

Every September on the first day of fall, the Falls Free[®] Initiative promotes National Falls Prevention Awareness Day. States are encouraged to host and promote falls prevention awareness and screening activities to draw attention to the problem and offer older adults practical solutions. Forty-one states and DC participated in the 2016 event.

For more information, please visit ncoa.org/FallsPrevention.

For questions, please email fallsfree@ncoa.org.