

# Falls

## Introduction

Falls is a topic that is not seen very often, but is a problem amongst the elderly. I chose this topic because it is least talked about and occurs very often as any other health issue. Falls and their consequences are serious problems among the elderly population, worldwide. The elderly need to be looked after as if they were young children because of their old age. A fall can result in a fracture or a serious injury. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related situations that make their way to the emergency room. Many of these elderly die because of the seriousness of their falls. These elderly should be helped, which can prevent these falls and causing serious injury.

## Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

Older adults are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population. Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and disabilities for people that are 65 years old. The most serious fall injury is hip fracture. This can result in lack of physical activity, osteoporosis, low body mass index, and a previous hip fracture. With this being such a serious health issue, there should be more awareness to prevent these falls that result in serious injuries.

- **Web site #1 Name:** Reducing Falls and the Resulting Hip Fractures Among Older Women
- **Web address:** <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr4902a2.htm>
- **Background Information:**

Healthy People 2010 did not feature my topic on its Web sites, so I had to use another approach and gather information from another Web site. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that fall-related injuries are the leading cause of injury

deaths and disabilities amongst the elderly. They want to reduce the number of falls that result in an injury. They want to educate the elderly about strategies that they can use that will prevent these falls. They want to increase the knowledge of the risk factors that can result in a fall. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also would like the elderly to exercise to improve their strength and balance and to make some home modifications to reduce the risk of falls.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Falling in Nursing Homes
- **Web address:** <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/nursing.htm>
- **Background Information:**

On this Web site I found that falling in nursing homes was a huge problem. The point of this article was to determine why more deaths relating to falls occur in nursing homes. The elderly living in the nursing homes are frequently frailer than the ones who live outside in the community. These elderly are usually older, have chronic conditions, or have difficulties walking. They also have difficulty completing day-to-day activities, getting around, and taking care of themselves on a regular basis. Many falls result in a permanent disability that includes a reduced quality of life. (par.4)

- **Web site #3 Name:** CDC Falls Prevention Activities
- **Web address:** <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/FallsPreventionActivity.html>
- **Background Information:**

In this article there were many ways to prevent falls among the elderly. The Administration of Aging currently provides 24 out of the 50 states with a three year grant that helps the elderly. The purpose of this program is used to provide help in the disability prevention program. (par.1) There are also factors to prevent the elderly from becoming disabled because of falls. The program is reducing risk through changes in medical use, behavior, and physical functioning.

## Section 2: Research

- **Web site #1 Name:** Vitamin D Found to Reduce Age-Related Falls
- **Web address:** <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2004/10/041011075112.htm>
- **Summary of the research:**

Elderly people who include Vitamin D into their diets are found to have stronger muscles than those who don't, which can prevent falls that cause serious injuries.

Researchers have found that elderly have fallen down 22% less if they included Vitamin D in their diets. Vitamin D is very essential and can build up stable health for an elderly person from having a serious fall that can cause a lifelong disability. (par. 1, 2, & 3)

- **Web site #2 Name:** Falls by Elderly People at Home: Prevalence and Associated Factors
- **Web address:** <http://ageing.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/17/6/365>
- **Summary of the research:**

Studies have shown that more falls occur when the elderly are at home. The mobility of the elderly is impaired and this causes the fall. If the elderly is not able to move around as much as they are supposed to, falls may occur within the home.

Being left unattended is an easier way to have an accidental fall. Research also shows that the falls could also be caused by hypnotics and antidepressants. This was another result as to why many falls occur and can cause serious injuries.

- **Web site #3 Name:** Fear of Falling in the Elderly with Recurrent Dizziness: A Descriptive Study
- **Web address:** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20400207>
- **Summary of the research:**

I was surprised to find this article. Dizziness is also a factor as to why elderly people have re-occurring falls. The aim of this research was to analyze all the risk factors that included the fear of falling. Elderly people at the age of 65 have years of recurrent dizziness that result into a serious fall. Data that were collected have been found that the elderly have a fear of falling which may cause dizziness. This affects the

daily activities and social interaction for this elderly person. To prevent from falling researchers have come up with risk factors to prevent these falls such as: having more social relationships and being able to independently perform day to day activities.

### Section 3: Statistics

- **Web site #1 Name:** Falling Among Older Adults: An Overview
- **Web address:**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>
- **Summary of the statistics:**

The importance of having some type of estimates of falls among elderly people is that it is a part of monitoring the status of these elderly Americans falling in the U.S. It allows the assessment of these falls, allowing public health agencies and organizations to determine whether or not this is a serious health issue. The elderly population is affected the most due to these falls. Statistics show that more than one third of adults 65 and older fall each year in the United States. (Hornbrook et al. 1994; Hausdorff et al. 2001) This shows that these falls are occurring among the elderly and has a high percentage. With the knowledge of this health issue, this information may be helpful in addressing this problem.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Falls and Hip Fractures Among Older Adults
- **Web address:**  
[http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSP/CDCynergy\\_training/Content/activeinformation/resources/Falls\\_Older\\_Adults\\_Problem.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/DHDSP/CDCynergy_training/Content/activeinformation/resources/Falls_Older_Adults_Problem.pdf)
- **Summary of the statistics:**

The falling of an elderly person is very serious and can cause many serious injuries. The seriousness of these falls is that in the United States alone, one of every three adults 65 years or older fall each year. Race and gender is also another leading factor as to why these falls occur. Fall-related deaths are higher among men than in women and differ by race.

Also, white men have the highest death rate for a fall, followed by white women, black men, and black women. The factors that have been discovered to contribute to these falls are dementia, neurological and musculoskeletal disabilities, slippery surfaces, uneven floors, stairs, poor lighting, loose rugs, and unstable furniture.

- **Web site #3:** U.S. Fall Prevention Programs for Seniors
- **Web address:** <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/falls/fallprev.pdf>
- **Summary of the statistics:**

Among older adults, falls are a serious health issue and it seems to be getting worse. People of the age 65 years older, falls are the leading cause death and serious injuries. These falls do not seem to be getting better because of old age. These falls can be prevented but can still happen.

## Section 4: Consumer Information

- **Web site #1 Name:** Falls and Older Adults
- **Web address:** <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/aboutfalls/01.html>
- **Summary of the information:**

Many older adults have had a fall because they have lost their balance or slipped because they felt dizzy. The risk of falling comes with old age. Among these older adults falls are the number one causes of fractures and admissions to the hospital. Many of these adults are afraid of falling. This fear becomes more common as we get older.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Falls and Fractures
- **Web address:** <http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/falls.htm>
- **Summary of the information:**

Simple everyday activities can be altered because of a simple fall. If you fall as an elderly person, you are most likely to fracture or break a bone. A broken bone after a fall can lead to other serious problems. There are many reasons why the elderly have these non-expected falls. Their eyesight, hearing, muscles, and reflexes aren't how they

used to be. These cause a fear of falling. The fear of falling prevents the elderly from performing day to day activities. Staying healthy and doing things that can prevent falls is the best way to be.

- **Web site #3 Name:** Falls in Nursing Homes
- **Web address:** <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/nursing.htm>
- **Summary of the information:**

The falls that occur in nursing homes have the highest percentage of falls in elderly people. About 1,800 older adults living in nursing homes die each year from fall related injuries. Falls can also be a sign of other health issues. People living in nursing homes are generally frailer and weaker than those elderly that live outside in the community.

## Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- **Web site #1 Name:** New Knee May Improve Balance
- **Web address:** [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory\\_96285.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_96285.html)
- **Summary of the information:**

Replacement joints seem to enhance the balance in an elderly person. Since falls are so common, this new improvement can reduce these numbers. Balance is the most important thing that is needed for these elderly people. This study included 63 people, with an average age of 73. All of these people had total knee replacements and after one year, they all showed an improvement in their balance.

- **Web site #2 Name:** Improve Balance and Prevent Falls
- **Web address:** [http://www.moveforwardpt.com/improving\\_mobility/falls.html](http://www.moveforwardpt.com/improving_mobility/falls.html)
- **Summary of the information:**

As we all know, falls are the leading cause of the death of elderly people because of their health issues and poor balance. The best way to prevent these falls is to improve the balance of these elderly people. Balance can be improved by exercising to strengthen ankle, knee, and hip muscles. This will improve the function of the balance system and will prevent less falls.

- **Web site #3 Name:** 47,000 Older Adults Treated in Emergency Departments Annually for Fall Injuries Related to Walkers and Canes
- **Web address:** <http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/r090629.htm>
- **Summary of the information:**

Walkers and canes are a big help to the elderly for them to get around. Because they are big helpers, they can also be hazardous if they are not used safely. This study examined six years of emergency department medical records and found that the elderly had falls due to injuries given by walkers and canes. These walking aids are very important in helping the elderly but must be used safely to protect themselves in case of a fall.

**Conclusions:**

This topic showed how important this health issue is. Even though it is aimed toward elderly people, it can help you be able to help someone elderly in your family or community. With this knowledge of the cautions and risk factors, you will know what to do if this ever happens to you. Preventing falls is something that everyone can take action into to doing. We all can help each other to prevent these falls from happening and ending in a result of a serious injury.

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