

Fall Prevention Program

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We can protect our loved ones from falls and fall related injuries.

Through promoting practical lifestyle changes, evidence-based programs, and clinical-community partnerships, the Washington State Injury and Violence Prevention Program works to prevent older adult falls.

- One in five older adults report having fallen in the previous three months. About 30 percent of those falls resulted in an injury severe enough to cause the person to limit their activities for at least a day or visit a doctor.
- In 2015, over 12,600 Washington residents over age 65 were hospitalized for a fall related injury. That is more than 34 fall-related hospitalizations daily.
- Over 850 of older Washingtonians died from a fall or fall related injury in 2015. Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older adults. Falls threaten older adult's safety and independence.

The cost of health care and rehabilitation can be financially debilitating for an individual, as well as a community. Although costs are not available for Washington State specifically, in 2013, direct medical costs for falls in the U.S.—what patients and insurance companies pay -- totaled \$34 billion.

Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries. Each year, at least 800 older Washingtonians die as a result of falls.

DOH Role in Falls Prevention

The Washington State Falls Prevention works with local fall prevention advocates developing older adult fall prevention programs in their own neighborhoods and regions.

DOH partners with health care organizations to coordinate fall risk assessments, medication reviews and community strength and balance classes to create a multi-disciplinary systems approach to reduce falls.

The role of the IVP Falls Prevention Program is to:

- Increase public awareness and educate consumers and professionals about the risks of falls and how to prevent falls.
- Support, identify and disseminate evidence-based fall prevention programs and strategies
- Engage fall prevention coalition members to develop strategies to reduce falls in their area.
- Collect, analyze and distribute fall data.

Older Adult Falls Injury Pyramid



¹ 2015 data tables – DOH

² Estimated using 2012 national NEISS-AIP data adjusted to WA population

³ Estimated using 2012 BRFSS data

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Community Strategies to Reduce Falls

Fitness

Provide education to older adults on risk factors and fall prevention strategies, in combination with exercise programs and assessments.

Increase the availability of low cost, accessible exercise programs tailored for older adults.

Medication Management

Encourage older adults to identify an individual health care professional to help them manage their medications.

Educate and encourage health care providers to review medications.

Home Safety

Expand and enhance the delivery system for home modifications, home safety and related safety services.

Provide caregivers and family members with guidance on how to discuss the need for home modification and where to locate resources.

Health Care

Use the Medicaid Annual Wellness Visit as a pathway to wellness; encourage practitioners to screen, assess and intervene to reduce a patient's fall risk.

Increase multi-factorial fall risk assessment and management programs that include tailored follow-up interventions for older adults at high risk for falls.

What YOU can do to prevent falls

Talk to your doctor

Ask for a fall risk assessment. Share your history of recent falls.

Exercise to improve your strength and balance

Find a program you like and take a friend

Review your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist

Make sure side effects aren't increasing your risk of falling.

Get your vision and hearing checked annually.

Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

Keep your home safe

Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, and install grab bars in key areas.

*Washington's 65+ population
will grow 42% by 2025*

Washington's population is aging. In 2014, the population of Washington residents age 65 and older totaled 989,124; that number is projected to reach 1.4 million by 2025.

For more information:

Older Adult Falls Prevention Specialist

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