

Falls Among Older Adults in Oregon

PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Injury and Violence Prevention Program

Basic Facts

- Falls are the leading cause of injury death among adults age 65 years and older. Of 639 fall deaths in Oregon in 2013, 87% were among adults age 65 and older.
- In 2013, over 5,800 Oregon adults age 65 years and older were hospitalized as the result of a fall at a cost of more than \$219 million.
- Falls are not an inevitable part of aging— many falls can be prevented.
- As many as 30% of older adults who fall suffer significant injuries which may limit the ability to live independently.
- Screening older adults for falls in healthcare/social services can increase assessment referral, and increase patient/client awareness and engagement in prevention.
- Exercise programs that focus on decreasing falls, increasing strength, mobility, coordination, balance, and physical fitness, can reduce fall risk by approximately 20 to 60%.

Fatal falls

The rate of fatal falls among adults age 65 years and older was 91.9 per 100,000 in 2013, an increase of 46% since 2000. Older men have a higher risk of fatal fall, compared to women within the same age group. The rate of fatal falls among persons age 85 years and older is 21 times greater than for those age 65–74 years. An aging population, combined with increased life expectancy means fatal falls will likely continue to increase in the future.

Fall hospitalizations

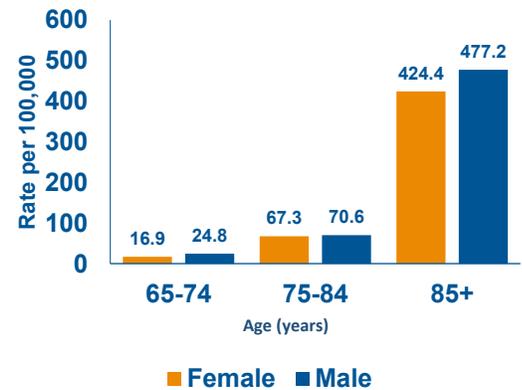
In 2013, the rate of fall hospitalization in Oregon was 964.4 per 100,000 adults age 65 and older. Women were hospitalized more often than men. There were 1,230.5 hospitalizations per 100,000 women age 65 and older in 2013, compared to 643.8 per 100,000 men age 65 and older. Hospitalization increases with age; those age 85 years and older are 7 times more likely to be hospitalized than those age 65-74 years.

Prevention

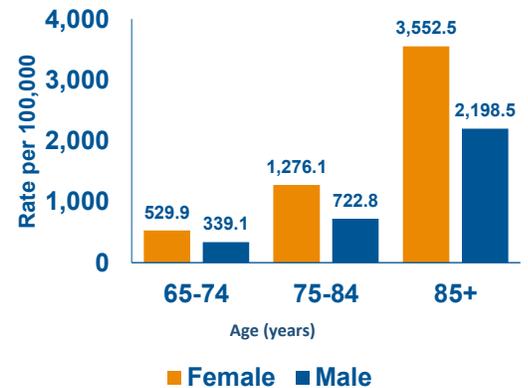
Fall prevention should address modifiable risk factors—strength, gait and balance, vision, home safety, and medication management. What can health care organizations, insurers, and providers do to prevent falls?

- Screen and assess patients age 65 years and older for falls and fall risk. Use the STEADI Toolkit (<http://1.usa.gov/13g00kP>) for falls screening, assessments, referrals, and patient education. Refer at-risk patients to evidence-based falls prevention programs in the community.
- Educate older patients, caregivers and their families about fall prevention strategies.
- Promote yearly eye exams. Regularly review medications.
- Ensure older adults get adequate calcium and vitamin D.
- Health insurers can cover falls prevention, screening and assessment as a member benefit.
- Host on-site falls prevention programs for organization members.

Fall Mortality Rates Among Older Adults, by Sex and Age Group, Oregon, 2013



Fall Hospitalization Rates Among Older Adults, by Sex and Age Group, Oregon, 2013



For more information: healthoregon.org/fallprevention

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Data sources: Oregon vital records, death certificates; Oregon hospital discharge data