California Falls Facts

- California has over 4.2 million Californians age 65 and older - the largest elderly population of any state in the US.
- Californians over age 85 are the fastest growing segment of the state population.
- In the ten years between 1999 and 2009, fall-related deaths among seniors (age 60+) increased by 86%.
- Approximately one-third of older Californians fall each year, with many of the 1.3 million suffering serious injury, particularly hip fractures and head injuries.
- The average estimated medical cost of a senior fall-related hospitalization in California is $30,000.
- For every hospitalized traffic injury to senior Californians, there are 15 hospitalizations for falls.
- Physicians are not widely screening for fall risk, despite published clinical guidelines.

Fall Deaths in California are Only the Tip of the Iceberg

Fall injuries in California are only the tip of the injury iceberg…

More than 40% of Californians hospitalized for hip fractures never return home or live independently again and 25% will die within one year.

The risk of fall injury increases dramatically with age. As the population ages, the impact and cost of fall-related deaths and injuries will increase dramatically unless this serious public health issue is addressed effectively.

Source: California Department of Public Health, EpiCenter, age 60+, 2009 and CDC WISQARS. 2010 inflation-adjusted dollars.
California Responds

Since 2003, numerous fall prevention activities have been initiated to raise awareness about fall prevention, increase the skills of professionals working in the field, and develop new evidence-based multifactorial programs to reduce falls. The following are several highlights of recent efforts:

- The Archstone Foundation funded the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence (FPCE), a consortium of the USC Andrus Gerontology Center, California State University (CSU) Fullerton’s Center for Successful Aging, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Veterans Administration Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center, and the University of California, Los Angeles David Geffen School of Medicine.
- Convened two statewide fall prevention summits that shared evidence-based approaches to fall prevention and set a fall prevention agenda with the aim to hold another summit in 2012.
- The FPCE convened the statewide StopFalls Network of 143 members including AAAs, senior injury programs, adult day health centers, and other community service providers.
- Supported the development of 11 fall prevention coalitions and 6 program expansion projects across California that strengthened the fall prevention infrastructure in their communities.
- Fall risk reduction programs such as FallProof™, created and disseminated by the Center for Successful Aging at CSU Fullerton, and the multifactorial InSTEP (Increasing Stability Through Evaluation and Practice) model program, that incorporates medical risk assessment and recommendations, physical activity, and home risk assessment and modification.
- Replication of A Matter of Balance, an AoA funded group behavior change program designed to reduce fear of falling and increase physical activity, under the auspices of the California Department of Aging in collaboration with the Partners in Care Foundation.
- Pilot implementation of 2 evidence-based fall prevention programs, Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance and Stepping On with the support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Developed online certification programs in home modification (through USC) and for exercise specialists and clinicians (through the Center for Successful Aging).
- Established an annual Fall Prevention Awareness Week with Senate Concurrent Resolution 77.
- Included falls-related questions in the California Health Interview Survey and analyzed findings to better understand the relationship between repeat falls and health care use.

Contact Information

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