

# Falls Prevention



**F**alls are the leading cause of injury death 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 evidence-based interventions, practical lifestyle adjustments, and 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-third of Americans aged 65+ falls each year.
- Every 14 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 29 minutes, an older adult dies following 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 2.4 million injuries treated in emergency departments annually, including over 772,000 hospitalizations and more than 21,700 deaths.
- In 2012, the total cost of fall injuries was over \$36 billion.
- The financial toll for older adult falls is expected to increase as the population ages and may reach \$59.6 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, self-limit activities and social engagements. This can result in further physical decline, depression, social isolation, and feelings of helplessness.

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON AGING

# FALLS PREVENTION FACT SHEET



## About NCOA

The National Council on Aging is the nation's leading nonprofit service and advocacy organization representing older adults and the community organizations that serve them. Our goal is to improve the health and economic well-being of 10 million older adults by 2020. For more than 60 years, NCOA has been a trusted voice and innovative problem-solver helping seniors navigate the challenges of aging in America. We work with local and national partners to give older adults tools and information to stay healthy and secure, and we advocate for programs and policies to improve the lives of all seniors, especially the most vulnerable. For more information, please visit: [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)"

## NCOA's Role

NCOA leads the Falls Free® Initiative, a national effort to address the growing public health issue of falls and fall-related injuries and deaths in older adults. The Initiative's work includes:

### *Falls Free* ✦ *National Action Plan*

In March 2005, NCOA, in collaboration with The Archstone Foundation and Home Safety Council, released the landmark evidence-based Falls Free® National Action Plan to prevent falls and fall-related injuries in older adults. The plan has served as a roadmap and catalyst for action, supporting grant and research applications, promoting the dissemination of evidence-based falls prevention programs, and serving as the basis of the Safety of Seniors Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-202).

### *Falls Free* ✦ *Initiative*

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. [www.NCOA.org/FallsMap](http://www.NCOA.org/FallsMap)

### *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 seniors practical solutions. Forty-seven states are participating in the 2014 event. [www.NCOA.org/FPAD](http://www.NCOA.org/FPAD)

For more information, please visit [www.NCOA.org/FallsPrevention](http://www.NCOA.org/FallsPrevention).