

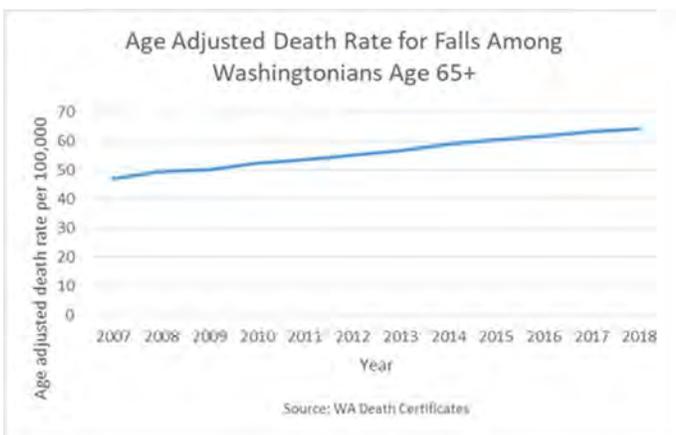
Older Adult Falls Prevention Program

Older Adult Falls Are Preventable

Falls are a growing area health problem for older adults, and there are many myths about falling. The most important message we can share with our communities is that most falls are preventable.

- *In 2018, there were 21,003 hospitalizations of Washington residents over age 65 for fall-related injuries¹*
- *There were 920 deaths of older adults from a fall or fall related injury in 2018²*
- *Washington has a 30% higher rate of deaths from falls than the United States as a whole³*

The cost of health care and rehabilitation can be financially debilitating for individuals, families and communities. In 2014, the lifetime cost for falls-related injuries in Washington State was \$451 million.⁴ The annual cost of falls in the United States is estimated to be \$50 billion.⁵



One in Three Older Adults Falls Each Year³



DOH's Role in Fall Prevention

The Department of Health leads falls prevention efforts occurring throughout Washington. We work with a wide range of partners to develop solutions and increase the visibility of fall prevention throughout communities by:

- Implementing [Finding Our Balance](#): Washington State Action Plan for Older Adult Falls Prevention
- Providing leadership and coordination for Washington State's federal Administration on Community Living Evidence-Based Falls Prevention Programs Grant
- Educating older adults, caregivers and healthcare providers about fall prevention
- Partnering with health organizations and providers to decrease the burden of falls on our healthcare system
- Identifying, building and disseminating evidence-based fall prevention programs and strategies
- Working with regional fall prevention coalitions to develop strategies to reduce falls
- Collecting, analyzing and distributing fall data
- Coordinating the Washington State Falls Prevention Coalition, an official member coalition of the National Council on Aging's Falls Free Initiative.

*Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries;
For those age 85+, falls account for three-quarters of all fatal injuries²*

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What Can You Do To Prevent Falls?

There are several key steps that each person can take to significantly reduce the risk of falls:

- Perform balance and strengthening exercises at least three times a week
- Always wear shoes that fit your feet well and have solid, non-skid soles
- Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medications for fall-related side effects
- Have your vision checked by an eye doctor every year, and wear glasses if prescribed
- Make sure you have adequate lighting in your home for safety
- Ask your doctor to do a fall risk screening, and tell them if you have fallen recently
- Make your home safer by putting grab bars in the shower, adding rails on both sides of your stairs and removing throw rugs
- Have an audiologist check your hearing if you or your family notice you are having difficulties. Hearing is an important component of balance

Resources:

- Referrals to falls prevention programs and other services:
www.waclc.org/patientreferral
- Locate falls prevention and health promotion programs in WA:
<http://livingwell.doh.wa.gov>
- Learn about Finding Our Balance: Washington State Action Plan for Older Adult Falls Prevention:
www.doh.wa.gov/findingourbalance

References:

1. WA Hospital Discharge Data, Comprehensive Hospitalization Abstract Reporting System (CHARS) 1987-2018. Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), July 2019.
2. Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Death Certificate Data, 1990-2018, Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), October 2019.
3. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2012-2018. Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, Community Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), December 2019.
4. Haddad, Y.K., Bergen, G., Florence, C.S. (2019, March/April). Estimating the Economic Burden Related to Older Adult Falls by State Journal of Public Health Management and Practice (25)2.
5. Florence, C.S., Bergen, G., Atherly, A., Burns, E., Stevens, J., Drake, C. (2018, March 7). Medical Costs of Fatal and Nonfatal Falls in Older Adults. Journal of the American Geriatrics Society (66)4.

For more information:

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www.doh.wa.gov/findingourbalance