

Falls in Older Adults, New York State

The Concern

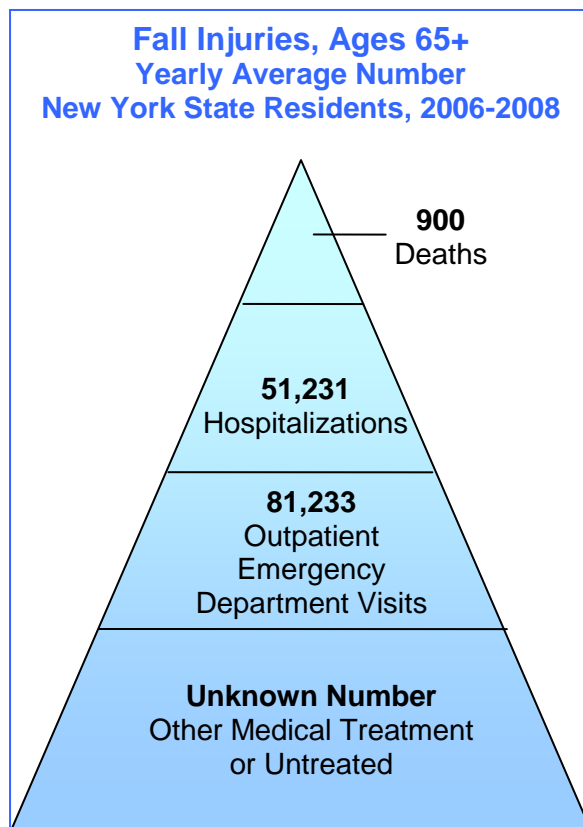
Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths, hospitalizations and emergency department visits among adults 65 and older. Falls can result in lasting, serious consequences, affecting mobility, independence and mental health.

Falls are not accidents! They are not random, uncontrollable acts of fate, but occur in predictable patterns, with recognizable risk factors and among identifiable populations. A fall is a predictable and preventable event.

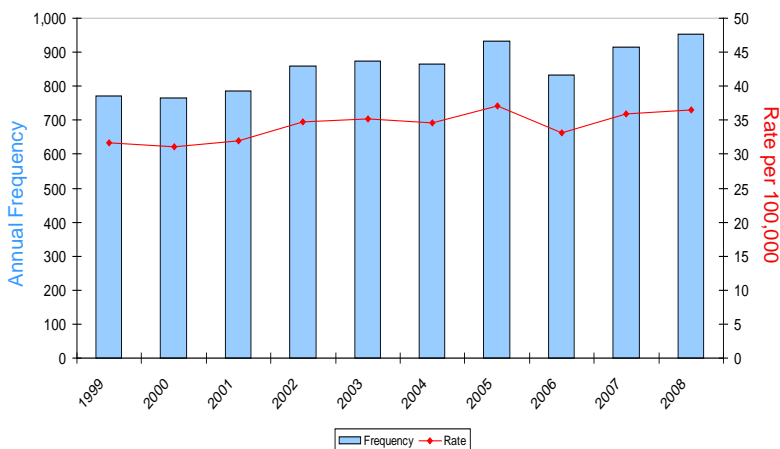
http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/falls.htm

Magnitude of the Falls Problem

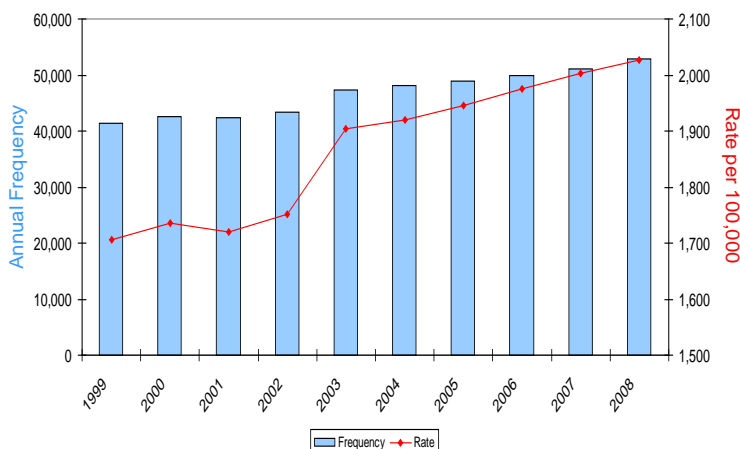
- **Every day, because of a fall:**
 - 2 older New Yorkers die
 - 140 older New Yorkers are hospitalized
 - 223 older New Yorkers are seen in Emergency Departments (ED)
- Falls account for \$1.7 billion in annual hospitalization charges and \$145.3 million in annual outpatient emergency department charges
 - **Approximately 95% of the hospitalization charges are billed to publicly funded programs such as Medicaid and Medicare**
- 60% of adults 65 and older who are hospitalized due to a fall end up in a nursing home or rehabilitation center
- Among adults 65 and older who are hospitalized due to a fall, 11% suffer a traumatic brain injury and 27% experience a hip fracture
- **Fall injuries among older adults in New York State are increasing!**
 - From 1999 to 2008:**
 - Rate of fall-related deaths increased 15%
 - Rate of fall-related hospitalizations increased 19%



Deaths Due to Falls, Ages 65+ New York State Residents, 1999-2008



Hospitalizations Due to Falls, Ages 65+ New York State Residents, 1999-2008



Many Falls are the Result of Multiple Risk Factors Working in Concert

Who is at Risk?

- **Males** have a higher risk of death due to falls
- **Females** have a higher risk of hip fracture due to falls
- **Aging** increases the risk of falling and the severity of a fall injury
- People who have **previously fallen** are at an increased risk to fall again
- People who suffer from **sleep disturbances** are at an increased risk of falling

What Conditions Increase the Risk of Falling?

- **Leg weakness** is associated with a four-fold increase in the risk of falling
- **Problems with gait and balance** are associated with a 3-fold increase in the risk of falling
- **Vision impairment** increases the risk of falling by 2.5 times
- **Chronic conditions** such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, arthritis, osteoporosis and incontinence increase the risk of falling
- **A fear of falling** leads to loss of confidence, an avoidance of physical activity, an increased functional decline, and ultimately an increased risk of falling
- **Taking four or more medications** puts older adults at risk for falling

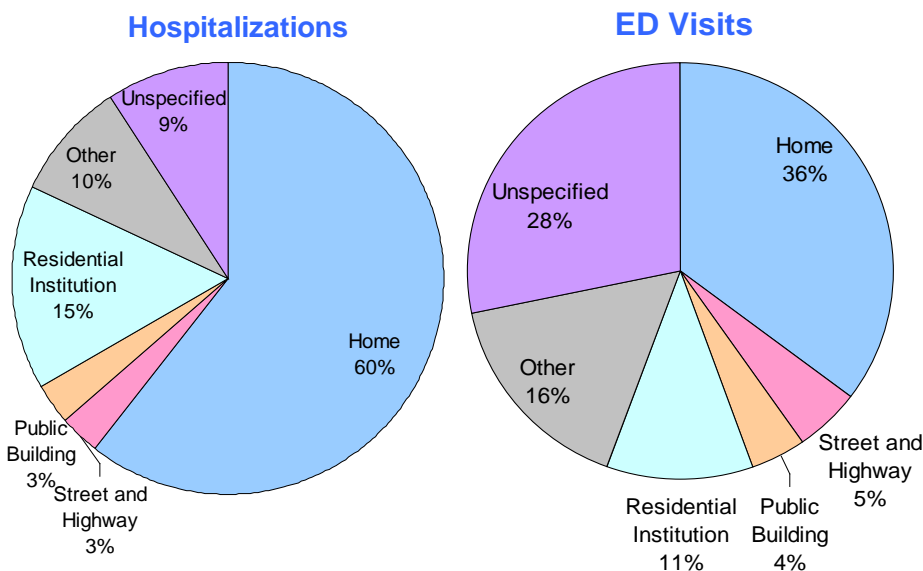
Where is the Risk?

- 60% of fall-related hospitalizations in older adults occur in the **home**
- 36% of fall-related ED visits in older adults occur in the **home**

Home Hazards Include:

- Clutter in walkways and on stairs
- Slippery or inconsistent flooring surfaces
- Unstable furniture
- Poor / inadequate lighting
- Pets and pet-related objects
- Lack of stair railings or grab bars
- Lack of easy access bathrooms

Place of Fall, Ages 65+
New York State Residents, 2006-2008



Prevention Strategies

What reduces the risk of falling?

- **Medication review**
- **Home assessments with modification**
- **Exercise**
- **Annual vision exams**

Falls are the leading cause of injury among New Yorkers over 65 – they CAN be prevented!

For more information on fall prevention please contact the NYS Department of Health, Injury Prevention Program at (518) 473-1143, injury@health.state.ny.us. Your health care provider is also an excellent resource about fall injuries and prevention. Web resources include: www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/ www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm

Sources:
 NYSDOH, Injury Prevention Program
 SPARCS January 2010
 Vital Statistics Death Files May 2010
 World Health Organization, Global Report on Falls Prevention in Older Age 2007