

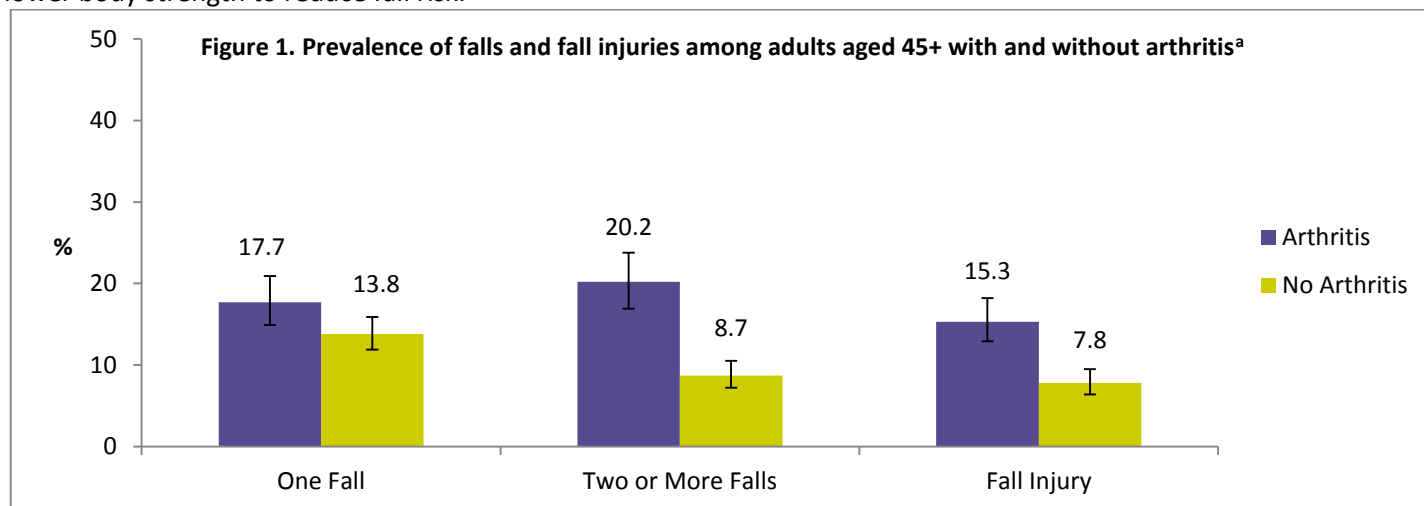
## Information for Action # 2015-3

### New York adults with arthritis are at increased risk for falls and fall-related injuries

In New York (NY) and nationally, falls are the leading cause of injury-related morbidity and mortality among older adults.<sup>1</sup> An estimated one in three (2.15 million) NY adults aged 45 years and older reported at least one fall in the past 12 months. One risk factor for falling is poor neuromuscular function (i.e., gait speed and balance), which is common among persons with arthritis.<sup>1</sup> According to the 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data:

- **NY adults with arthritis are significantly more likely than adults without arthritis to report two or more falls (20.2% vs. 8.7%) and fall-related injuries (15.3% vs. 7.8%) in the past 12 months (Figure 1).**

Effective arthritis exercise programs improve function and reduce pain by correcting muscle weakness and balance dysfunction. Effective fall prevention programs use exercise or physical therapy approaches to improve gait, balance and lower body strength to reduce fall risk.<sup>1</sup>



Data Source: 2012 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System; estimates age-adjusted to the year 2000 United States standard population.

<sup>a</sup>Falls were defined as self-reported number of falls (or when a person unintentionally comes to rest on the ground or another lower level) in past 12 months.

Injury from a fall was defined as self-reported injury caused by a fall in past 12 months that caused respondent to limit their regular activities for ≥1 days or to go see a doctor. Doctor-diagnosed arthritis was defined based on a "yes" response to the question, "Have you ever been told by a doctor or other health professional that you have some form of arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, lupus, or fibromyalgia?"

### PUBLIC HEALTH OPPORTUNITY

To reduce the risk of falls among adults with arthritis, public health practitioners can:

- Educate care professionals and adults with arthritis about the link between arthritis and falls.
- Promote evidence-based physical activity programs that improve physical conditioning, and fall prevention programs that may also help adults with arthritis.

Please visit [www.health.ny.gov/arthritis](http://www.health.ny.gov/arthritis) and [www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury\\_prevention/falls](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/falls) for more information on arthritis management and fall prevention programs currently available in NY.

### Contact:

For more information about the data included and their specific implications for action, please send an email to [DCDIPIFA@health.ny.gov](mailto:DCDIPIFA@health.ny.gov) with IFA # 2015-3 in the subject line.

### References:

1. Barbour KE, et al. State-Specific Prevalence of Falls and Fall Injuries among Adults Aged 45 Years and Older with and without Arthritis--- United States, 2012 *Morb Mort Week Rep*, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014



Department  
of Health