

BEST FOOT FORWARD – DON'T LET A FALL GET YOU DOWN

Independence

It's something we all value, especially as we grow older and health concerns may begin to limit our activities. One simple way you can help protect your independence is by reducing your risk of slips and falls. Older Canadians have a high risk of falling. Every year, one in three Canadians over age 65 will fall – often with serious consequences. Injuries such as hip, wrist and pelvic fractures are common in this age group and can have a lasting impact on quality of life. There are easy things you can do to help prevent falls. Most falls happen in the home so that is the first place to start taking precautions. Your physical health is also important. Talk to a health professional about evaluating your health risks. A few steps of prevention can help you stay safely on your feet.

Some Statistics on Senior's Falls

- Falls are the second leading cause, after motor vehicle collisions, of injury-related hospitalizations for all ages, accounting for 29% of injury admissions.
- Almost 62% of injury-related hospitalizations for seniors are the result of falls.
- The fall-related injury rate is nine times greater among seniors than among those less than 65 years of age.
- Almost half of seniors who fall experience a minor injury, and 5% to 25% sustain a serious injury such as a fracture or a sprain.
- Falls cause more than 90% of all hip fractures in seniors and 20% die within a year of the fracture.
- Families are often unable to provide care, and 40% of all nursing home admissions occur as a result of falls by older people.
- Even without an injury, a fall can cause a loss in confidence and a curtailment of activities, which can lead to a decline in health and function and contribute to future falls with more serious outcomes.
- A 20% reduction in falls would translate to an estimated 7,500 fewer hospitalizations and 1,800 fewer permanently disabled seniors. The overall national savings could amount to \$138 million annually.
- The magnitude of the problem of falls among older adults is reflected in the 300% increase in publications on the issue between 1985 and 2005.

(From the Public Health Agency of Canada 2005 Report on Senior's Falls in Canada)