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Senior Safety News

As Winter approaches, we want to emphasize how community activists and senior housing management can help seniors and retirees avoid falls.

We include an overview of the costs to seniors and the communities, in order to remind people in the community how important safety awareness can be when implemented.

We include statistics and tips on avoiding fires. This is the holiday season with its increasing risk of fires.



As a note, all pictures of posters are linked to a poster .pdf file which you can bring up in Acrobat and print off.

For a comprehensive list of posters, checklist and comprehensive booklets for both the community and senior housing go to Senior Safety Online by clicking on:

www.seniorsafetyonline.com

Stay healthy & Safe During the Holiday Season

Also, don't forget your flu shots

How Can We Prevent Falls?

Researchers have identified that the most effective fall prevention programs have many components. First a person needs to understand what may put them at risk for falling. Some risks can be reduced. Medical providers can help to identify risks and develop a plan. Specific physical activity can target reduce fall risk by increasing balance and mobility skills. Also changes to the home and community environment can reduce hazards and help support a person in completing daily activities. While this is not a comprehensive list of fall prevention strategies, it's a good place to start:

Medical Management (Risk Assessment and Follow-up)

The first step is to talk with a health professional about getting a risk assessment for falling. During routine doctor visits, ask the doctor about your risk of falling. Some of the health factors that can contribute to falls are osteoporosis, being over age 80, changes in balance and walking patterns, changes in vision and sensation, and taking multiple medications. Certain medications cause older adults to experience dizziness. Once you have an idea of some of the risks and how you might be affected, you can work with your doctor, other health professionals, and your family to determine what factors can be modified to reduce your risk.

Balance & Mobility (Physical Activity)

Studies show that balance, flexibility, and strength training not only improve and mobility, but also reduce the risk of falling. Statistics show that most older adults do not exercise regularly, and 35% of people over



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the age of 65 do not participate in any leisure physical activity. This lack of exercise only makes it harder for individuals to recover after a fall. Many people are afraid of falling again and reduce their physical activity even more. There are many creative and low-impact forms of physical activity for fall prevention, such as tai chi.

Environmental Modification

The environment can present many hazards. At home older adults are commonly concerned about falling in the bathtub or on steps. In the community there can be trip hazards such as uneven or cracked sidewalks. By making changes to the home and community environment a person can feel safer and less at risk of falling. For example, the bathroom can be modified by install grab bars as in the shower or tub, having a place to sit, and having non-slip surfaces. Steps can have handrails, adequate lighting, and contrast between steps. Community sidewalks in disrepair can be reported to city officials for repair.



.....*Source: www.stopfalls.org*

Falls Among Older Adults: An Overview

How big is the problem?

- More than one third of adults 65 and older fall each year in the United States (Hornbrook et al. 1994; Hausdorff et al. 2001).
 - Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma (CDC 2005).
 - In 2005, 15,800 people 65 and older died from injuries related to unintentional falls; about 1.8 million people 65 and older were treated in emergency departments for nonfatal injuries from falls, and more than 433,000 of these patients were hospitalized (CDC 2005).
 - The rates of fall-related deaths among older adults rose significantly over the past decade (Stevens 2006).
- What outcomes are linked to falls?
- Twenty percent to 30% of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as bruises, hip fractures, or head traumas. These injuries can make it hard to get around and limit independent living. They also can increase the risk of early death (Alexander et al. 1992; Sterling et al. 2001).

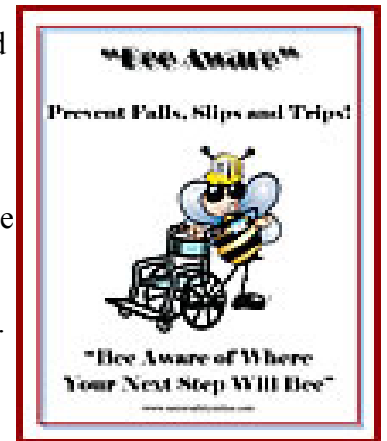


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- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries, or TBI (Jager et al. 2000). In 2000, TBI accounted for 46% of fatal falls among older adults (Stevens et al. 2006).
- Most fractures among older adults are caused by falls (Bell et al. 2000).
- The most common fractures are of the spine, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, pelvis, upper arm, and hand (Scott 1990).
- Many people who fall, even those who are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities, leading to reduced mobility and physical fitness, and increasing their actual risk of falling (Vellas et al. 1997).
- In 2000, direct medical costs totaled \$0.2 billion (\$179 million) for fatal falls and \$19 billion for nonfatal fall injuries (Stevens et al. 2006).

Who is at risk?

- Men are more likely to die from a fall. After adjusting for age, the fall fatality rate in 2004 was 49% higher for men than for women (CDC 2005).
- Women are 67% more likely than men to have a nonfatal fall injury (CDC 2005).
- Rates of fall-related fractures among older adults are more than twice as high for women as for men (Stevens et al. 2005).
- In 2003, about 72% of older adults admitted to the hospital for hip fractures were women (CDC 2005).
- The risk of being seriously injured in a fall increases with age. In 2001, the rates of fall injuries for adults 85 and older were four to five times that of adults 65 to 74 (Stevens et al. 2005)
- Nearly 85% of deaths from falls in 2004 were among people 75 and older (CDC 2005).
- People 75 and older who fall are four to five times more likely to be admitted to a long-term care facility for a year or longer (Donald et al. 1999).
- There is little difference in fatal fall rates between whites and blacks, ages 65 to 74 (CDC 2006).
- After age 75, white men have the highest fatality rates, followed by white women, black men, and black women (CDC 2005).



.....Source CDC



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Safety Tips for Older Americans in Avoiding Fires

Kitchen Fires

Most kitchen fires occur because food is left unattended on the stove or in the oven. If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, take a spoon or potholder with you to remind you to return to the kitchen. Never cook with loose, dangling sleeves that can ignite easily. Heat cooking oils gradually and use extra caution when deep-frying. If a fire breaks out in a pan, put a lid on the pan. Never throw water on a grease fire. Never use a range or stove to heat your home.

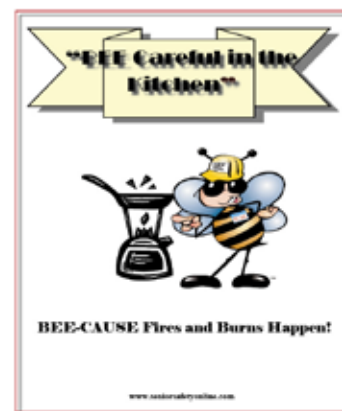
Space Heaters

Buy only Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) approved heaters. Use only the manufacturer's recommended fuel for each heater. Do not use electric space heaters in the bathroom or around other wet areas. Do not dry or store objects on top of your heater. Keep combustibles away from heat sources.

Smoking

Don't leave smoking materials unattended. Use "safety ashtrays" with wide lips. Empty all ashtrays into the toilet or a metal container every night before going to bed. Never smoke in bed.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family



According to the National Fire Protection Association,

In 2003, 80% of fires in the United States occurred in the home, resulting in 3,925 fire deaths.

In the U.S., someone dies from a home fire roughly every 134 minutes.

Roughly half of all home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires that were reported between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. But only one-quarter of home fires occur between those hours.

Although children five and under make up about 9% of the country's population, they accounted for 17% of the home fire deaths.

Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February, smoking and heating equipment caused similar shares of fire deaths.

Every 20 seconds, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the nation.

We have Fire hazard checklists for Retirees living at home. Click on [Senior Safety Online's home Fire Checklists](#)