

# Falls Among Older Adults in Washington State

## A Growing Concern

Falls among older adults are a leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injury in the U.S. and Washington State. Hospital costs associated with injuries sustained by falls account for a significant share of healthcare dollars spent on injury-related care.

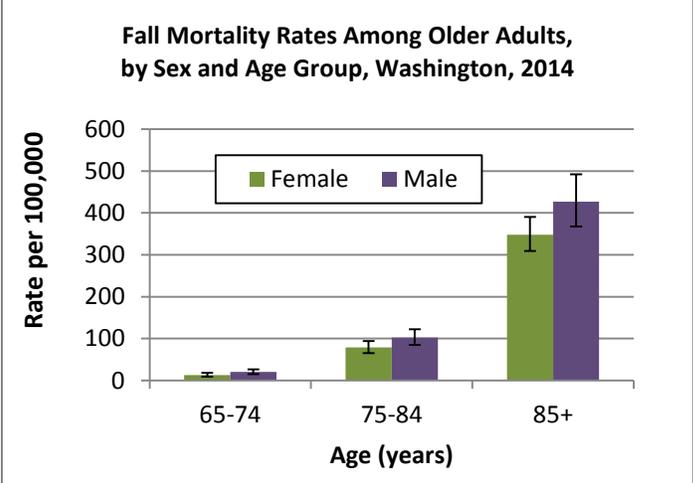
Falls are not an inevitable part of aging. Many falls can be prevented.

## Quick Facts

- In 2014, 815 fall deaths occurred in Washington State among adults 65 years old and older. Eighty-seven percent of all fall deaths occurred among adults 65 years old and older.
- More than 15,000 fall-related hospitalizations occurred in 2014 among adults 65 years old and older, at a cost of more than \$1 billion in Washington State.
- As many as 30 percent of older adults who fall suffer significant injuries that may limit the ability to live independently.
- Screening older adults for falls in healthcare and social services can increase assessment referral, and increase patient-client awareness and engagement.
- Exercise programs that focus on decreasing falls, increasing strength, mobility, coordination, balance, and physical fitness, can reduce fall risk by 20 to 60 percent.

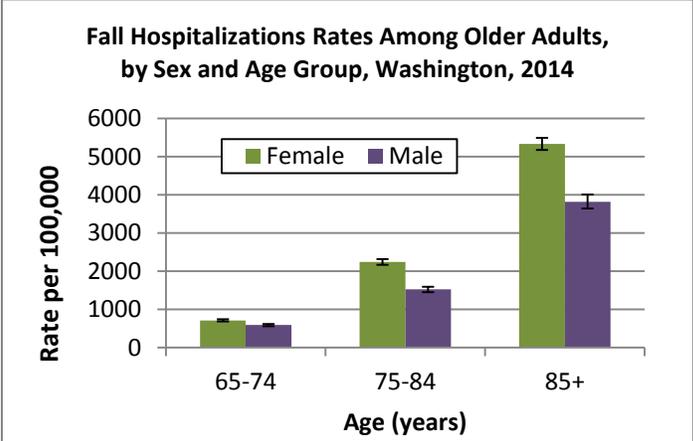
## Fatal Falls

The rate of fatal falls among adults 65 years old and older was 83 per 100,000 in 2014. This rate has increased from 59 per 100,000 in 2000. Older men have a higher risk of fatal fall compared to women in the same age group. The rate of fatal fall increases dramatically with age.



## Fall Hospitalizations

In 2014, the rate of fall hospitalizations in Washington State among adults 65 years old and older was 308 per 100,000. Women were hospitalized more often than men. There were 368 hospitalizations per 100,000 women 65 years old and older in 2014, compared to 245 per 100,000 men 65 years old and older. Hospitalization increases with age; those 85 years old and older are seven times more likely to be hospitalized than those 65 to 74 years old.



## Prevention Strategies for Older Adults

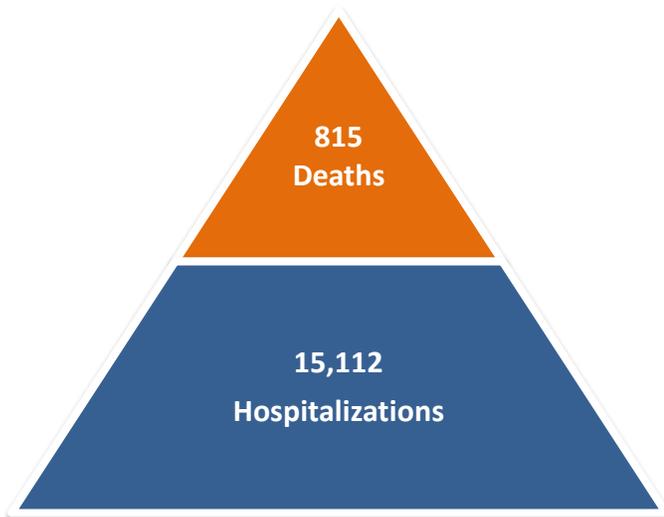
Proven interventions can reduce falls and help older adults live better and longer.

Older adults can prevent falls by:

- Regular exercise to increase strength and improve balance.
- Ask your doctor to review medications.
- Have your eyes checked annually and update eye glasses if needed.
- Make your home safe by performing a home safety check.

## Burden of Fall Injuries

The burden of fall-related Injuries among older adults in Washington State, Ages 65-plus, 2014.



## Prevention Strategies for Healthcare Organizations, Providers and Insurers

- Screen and assess patients age 65 and older. Use STEADI for fall screening, assessments, referrals and patient education.
- Refer at-risk patients to evidence-based fall prevention programs in the community
- Ensure older adults get adequate calcium and vitamin D.
- Educate patients , caregivers and families about fall prevention strategies
- Promote annual eye exams and medication reviews.
- Community organizations can host on-site fall prevention programs.
- Health insurers can cover fall prevention, screening and assessment as a member benefit.

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