



# Falls Prevention

## FACT SHEET

**F**alls are the leading cause of injury death for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs.

However, falling is not an inevitable result of aging. Through evidence-based interventions, practical lifestyle adjustments, and community partnerships, the number of falls among seniors can be substantially reduced.

### The Challenge

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- One third of Americans aged 65+ falls each year.
- Every 17 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 29 minutes, an older adult dies following a fall.
- Falls are the leading cause of fatal injury and the most common cause of nonfatal trauma related hospital admissions among older adults.
- Falls result in more than 2 million fall injuries treated in emergency departments, including over 550,000 hospitalizations and more than 18,000 deaths.
- In 2000, the direct medical cost of fatal and nonfatal fall injuries totaled over \$19 billion, or \$23.6 billion in 2005 dollars.
- The financial toll for older adult falls is expected to increase as the population ages and may reach \$54.9 billion by 2020.

Falls with or without injury also carry a heavy quality of life impact. A growing number of older adults fear falling and, as a result, self-limit activities and social engagements. This can result in further physical decline, depression, social isolation, and feelings of helplessness.

### NCOA's Role

NCOA leads the Falls Free® Initiative, a national effort to address the growing public health issue of falls and fall-related injuries and deaths in older adults. The initiative's work includes:

#### Falls Free® National Action Plan

In March 2005, NCOA, in collaboration with the Archstone Foundation and Home Safety Council, released the landmark evidence-based Falls Free® National Action Plan to prevent falls and fall-related injuries in older adults. The plan has served as a roadmap and catalyst for action,



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supporting grant and research applications, supporting the dissemination of evidence-based falls prevention programs, and serving as the basis of the Safety of Seniors Act of 2007.

## Falls Free® Coalition

The coalition is a group of over 70 national organizations charged with working toward the progress of one or more of strategies in the National Action Plan. Members are engaged in disseminating proven falls prevention programs, advocating for funding, and educating older adults about how they can reduce their risk of falling. The national coalition also supports 36 states and growing that work together to promote effective state strategies to address falls.

## National Falls Prevention Awareness Day

Every September on the first day of fall, the Falls Free® coalition promotes National Falls Prevention Awareness Day. States are encouraged to host and promote falls prevention awareness and screening activities to draw attention to the problem and offer seniors practical solutions. Thirty-seven states participated in the 2010 event.

For more information, please visit [www.NCOA.org/improving-health/falls-prevention](http://www.NCOA.org/improving-health/falls-prevention).

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## About NCOA

The National Council on Aging is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCOA is a national voice for older Americans—especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged—and the community organizations that serve them. It brings together nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government to develop creative solutions that improve the lives of all older adults. NCOA works with thousands of organizations across the country to help seniors find jobs and benefits, improve health, live independently, and remain active in their communities. For more information, please visit [www.NCOA.org](http://www.NCOA.org).

