Facts About Falls Among Older Ohioans

Falls are an epidemic among our elders and are the number one cause of injuries leading to ER visits, hospital stays and deaths in Ohioans age 65-plus.

An older Ohioan falls every minute on average, resulting in an injury every five minutes, an emergency department visit every 6.5 minutes, two hospitalizations each hour and three deaths each day.

The number of fatal falls among older Ohioans increased 74 percent from 2007-2017.

Older Ohioans account for a disproportionate share of fall-related injuries. While residents age 65-plus make up nearly 17 percent of our population, they account for more than 87 percent of fatal falls in 2017.

The total estimated medical cost of falls is $1.1 billion annually in Ohio. Add costs related to work loss and the total climbs to $1.9 billion, or $5.2 million each day.

One in three Ohioans age 65-plus living in the community fall each year. Yet, less than half talk to their doctors about their risks or history of falls.

In 2017, 58 percent of falls deaths among adults age 65 and older occurred in the home while 20 percent occurred in a residential facility, such as a nursing home.

The causes of falls vary widely. Risk factors include lower body weakness, the use of multiple medications, reduced vision, chronic conditions and unsafe homes.

Ohioans age 65 or older who live with chronic conditions such as depression, diabetes, obesity and COPD are significantly more likely to have fallen in the previous year. Disability and lack of physical activity also increase the risk of falling.

Many who fall, even those who are not injured, may develop a fear of falling, which can lead to reduced activity and actually put them at higher risk for falling.

Data compiled by the Ohio Department of Health

Falls *are not* a normal part of aging, and most falls *can be prevented*.

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