

# Falls in Older Adults, New York State

The Concern

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths, hospitalizations and emergency department visits among adults 65 and older. Falls can result in lasting, serious consequences, affecting mobility, independence and mental health.

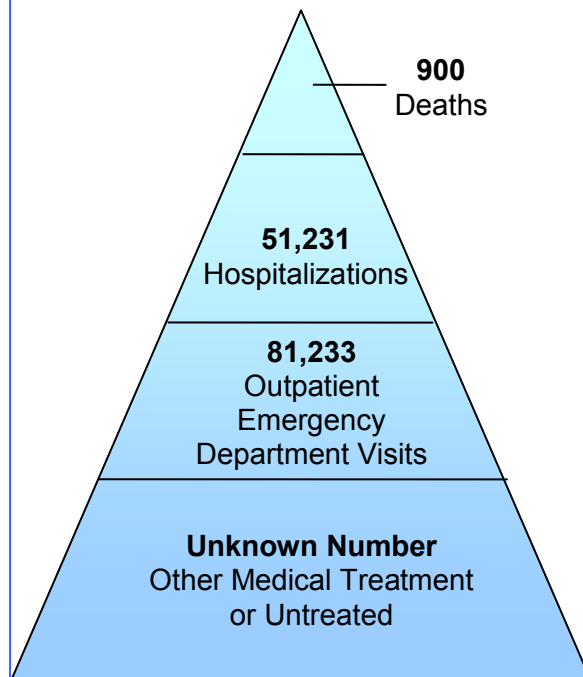
*Falls are not accidents! They are not random, uncontrollable acts of fate, but occur in predictable patterns, with recognizable risk factors and among identifiable populations. A fall is a predictable and preventable event.*

[http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury\\_prevention/falls.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/falls.htm)

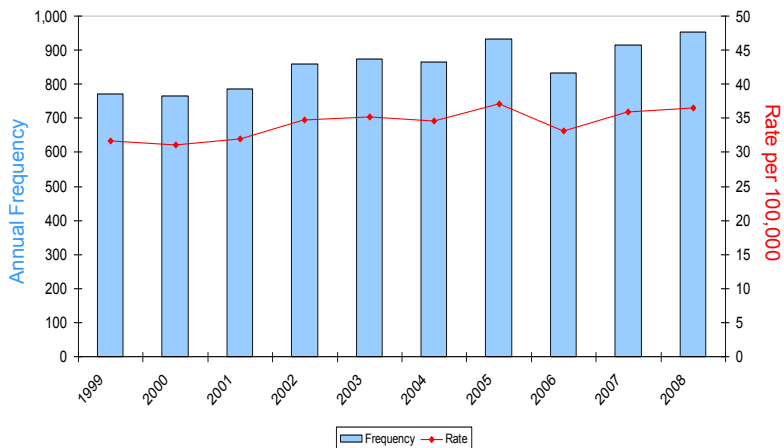
## Magnitude of the Falls Problem

- **Every day, because of a fall:**
  - 2 older New Yorkers die
  - 140 older New Yorkers are hospitalized
  - 223 older New Yorkers are seen in Emergency Departments (ED)
- Falls account for \$1.7 billion in annual hospitalization charges and \$145.3 million in annual outpatient emergency department charges
  - **Approximately 95% of the hospitalization charges are billed to publicly funded programs such as Medicaid and Medicare**
- 60% of adults 65 and older who are hospitalized due to a fall end up in a nursing home or rehabilitation center
- Among adults 65 and older who are hospitalized due to a fall, 11% suffer a traumatic brain injury and 27% experience a hip fracture
- **Fall injuries among older adults in New York State are increasing!**
  - From 1999 to 2008:**
    - Rate of fall-related deaths increased 15%
    - Rate of fall-related hospitalizations increased 19%

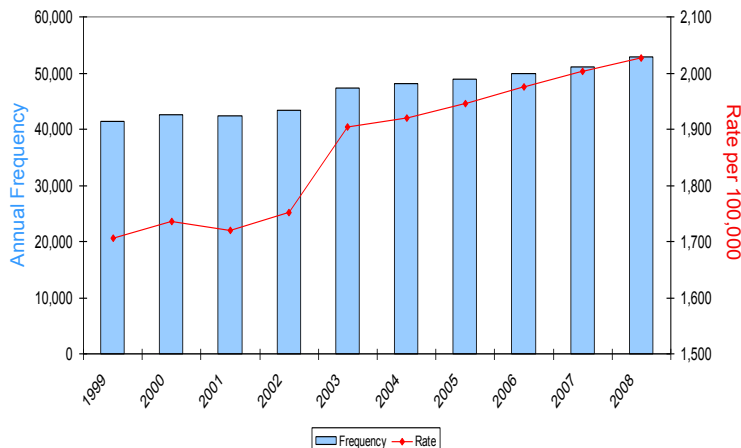
**Fall Injuries, Ages 65+ Yearly Average Number New York State Residents, 2006-2008**



**Deaths Due to Falls, Ages 65+ New York State Residents, 1999-2008**



**Hospitalizations Due to Falls, Ages 65+ New York State Residents, 1999-2008**



# Many Falls are the Result of Multiple Risk Factors Working in Concert

## Who is at Risk?

- **Males** have a higher risk of death due to falls
- **Females** have a higher risk of hip fracture due to falls
- **Aging** increases the risk of falling and the severity of a fall injury
- People who have **previously fallen** are at an increased risk to fall again
- People who suffer from **sleep disturbances** are at an increased risk of falling

## What Conditions Increase the Risk of Falling?

- **Leg weakness** is associated with a four-fold increase in the risk of falling
- **Problems with gait and balance** are associated with a 3-fold increase in the risk of falling
- **Vision impairment** increases the risk of falling by 2.5 times
- **Chronic conditions** such as Parkinson's disease, stroke, arthritis, osteoporosis and incontinence increase the risk of falling
- **A fear of falling** leads to loss of confidence, an avoidance of physical activity, an increased functional decline, and ultimately an increased risk of falling
- **Taking four or more medications** puts older adults at risk for falling

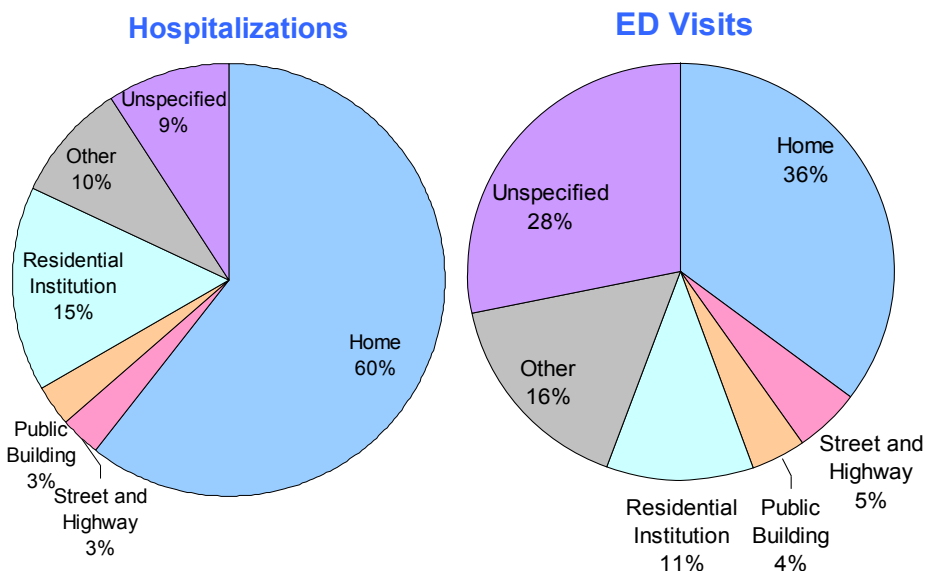
## Where is the Risk?

- 60% of fall-related hospitalizations in older adults occur in the **home**
- 36% of fall-related ED visits in older adults occur in the **home**

### Home Hazards Include:

- Clutter in walkways and on stairs
- Slippery or inconsistent flooring surfaces
- Unstable furniture
- Poor / inadequate lighting
- Pets and pet-related objects
- Lack of stair railings or grab bars
- Lack of easy access bathrooms

**Place of Fall, Ages 65+  
New York State Residents, 2006-2008**



## Prevention Strategies

### What reduces the risk of falling?

- **Medication review**
- **Home assessments with modification**
- **Exercise**
- **Annual vision exams**

**Falls are the leading cause of injury among New Yorkers over 65 – they CAN be prevented!**

**For more information on fall prevention** please contact the NYS Department of Health, Injury Prevention Program at (518) 473-1143, [injury@health.state.ny.us](mailto:injury@health.state.ny.us). Your health care provider is also an excellent resource about fall injuries and prevention. Web resources include: [www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury\\_prevention/](http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/injury_prevention/) [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm)

Sources:  
 NYSDOH, Injury Prevention Program  
 SPARCS January 2010  
 Vital Statistics Death Files May 2010  
 World Health Organization, Global Report on Falls Prevention in Older Age 2007