

Healthy Aging Communication Network

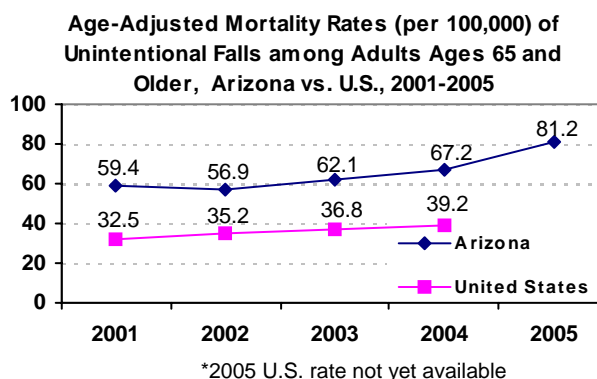
Living Stronger & Longer

Falls among Arizona Residents 65 Years and Older

Magnitude of the problem

Unintentional falls are a public health problem that impacts the lives of thousands of Arizona residents each year. In 2004, Arizona ranked 6th in the nation for unintentional fall-related deaths among adults ages 65 and older.¹ Between 2001 and 2005, the age-adjusted death rate of unintentional falls among older adults increased from 59.4 deaths per 100,000 residents to 81.2 deaths per 100,000 residents. This represents a 37 percent increase in the rate of deaths over five years.

In 2005, falls accounted for 59 percent of unintentional injury deaths among older adult residents of Arizona (n=583). Additionally, there were 8,985 inpatient hospitalizations and 21,971 emergency department visits due to unintentional fall-related injuries among older adult residents of Arizona. Hospitalizations and emergency department visits do not include data from federal or tribal hospitals (Indian Health Services).



Cost of unintentional falls

For the 8,985 hospitalizations due to unintentional falls among older adults:

- The average length of stay was 4.9 days.
- The average charge per hospitalization was \$30,160.
- Total hospitalization charges were more than \$270 million (does not include costs related to physician care, rehabilitation, or long-term disability).
- 71 percent of these charges were paid for by Medicare (n=6,366).
- 52 percent were discharged to skilled nursing facilities (n=4,633).

Who is at risk?

Established risk factors for fall-related injury include:

- advanced age
- physical frailty
- poor lower body strength
 - difficulty climbing stairs
 - difficulty rising from chairs
- poor vision
- medications (number & type)
- safety hazards in home
- chronic diseases
- poor balance
- frequent dizziness
- history of falls

What will reduce the risk of unintentional falls?

Many falls are preventable. The most effective way to prevent unintentional falls among older adults is a comprehensive approach that includes all of the following:

- Maintain a regular exercise program to increase strength, balance, and coordination.
- Regularly review medications with a healthcare provider.
- Have yearly eye exams.
- Modify home environment to reduce hazards such as slippery floors and poor lighting.

Please visit the Healthy Aging Arizona website at <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/healthyagingarizona/index.htm>.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS) [online]. (2005) [cited 2007 May 31]. Available from URL: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars.

