

Overview of Falls & the Older Adult

Education for Health Care Professionals

Part 1: The Extent of the Problem



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Defining a Fall



A fall is a sudden and unintentional change of position to a lower level that may, or may not result in an injury. (PHAC, 2014; Scott, 2012)

Morse, 2009 describes three types of falls:

- 1. Accidental Fall** – a fall that happens because of extrinsic environmental factors and/or hazards such as tripping on a cord or slipping due to a spill on the floor.
- 2. Anticipated Physiological Fall** – a fall correlated with a known fall risk such as dementia, vision loss, impaired balance, etc. These are falls that are anticipated due to the individuals fall risk.
- 3. Unanticipated Physiological Fall** – a fall correlated with an unknown fall risk that was not predictable on a fall risk scale, such as a stroke or seizure.

(Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC], 2014; Scott, 2012; PHAC, 2016; Morse, 2009)



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Demographics and Fall-Related Injury



According to the Seniors' Falls in Canada: Second Report, older adults 65 years and over who reported fall-related injuries:

- were more often females (64% female compared to 36% male)
- of those females almost half who reported a fall related injury were widowed and/or living alone
- were more prevalent as age increased

(Statistics Canada, 2012)



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Canadian Statistics

FALLS are the **LEADING CAUSE OF INJURY** among older Canadians:
20-30% of seniors experience **1+** falls each year.

FALLS CAUSE:

85% of seniors' injury-related hospitalizations

95% of all hip fractures

\$2 Billion a year in direct healthcare costs

over 1/3 of seniors are admitted to **LONG-TERM CARE** following hospitalization for a fall



The average Canadian senior stays in hospital **10 DAYS longer** for falls than for any other cause

Older adults who fell within a residential care setting often had complex health issues such as multiple chronic health issues, limited mobility and advanced dementia. (PHAC, 2014)

(Government of Canada, 2016)



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Comparing Falls to Other Injuries

Number of injury deaths, hospitalizations, emergency room visits and related disability cases by cause in Canada, 2010

Description	Deaths	Hospitalizations	ER Visits	Permanent Partial Disability	Permanent Total Disability
Transport Incidents	2,820	28,350	290,782	7,204	699
FALLS	4,071	128,389	1,038,079	23,236	1,969
Drowning	369	247	1251	37	4
Fire/Burns	234	2,099	43,684	982	50
Unintentional Poisoning	1,568	7,893	54,245	1,731	109
Struck by/ Against Sports Equipment	<5	684	68,355	518	39
Other Unintentional Injuries	1,792	36,462	1,845,277	15,881	1,132
Suicide/Self-Harm	3,948	16,131	34,677	3,443	175
Violence	515	8,069	97,360	1,933	202
Undetermined Intent/Other	749	3,292	20,438	752	46

(Parachute, 2015)



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Economic Burden of Falls in Canada

Total, direct and indirect costs of injury by cause in Canada in 2010

Description	Total costs (\$ millions)	Direct costs (\$ millions)	Indirect costs (\$ millions)
Transport Incidents	4,289	2,145	2,144
FALLS	8,680	6,652	2,029
Drowning	187	13	175
Fire/Burns	366	177	188
Unintentional Poisoning	1,264	396	868
Struck by/ Against Sports Equipment	187	97	90
Other Unintentional Injuries	7,127	4,861	2,265
Suicide/Self-Harm	2,956	829	2,127
Violence	1,142	541	602
Undetermined Intent/Other	598	179	419

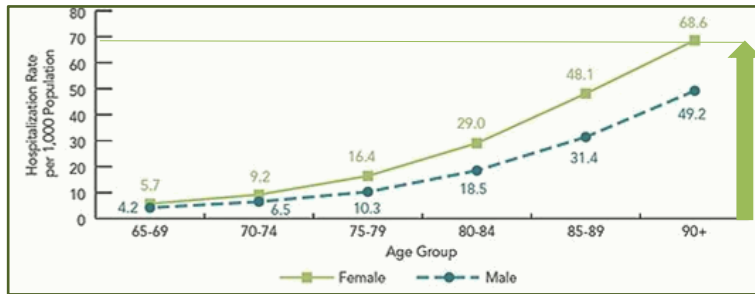
(Parachute, 2015)



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The Problem of Falls in Canada



Falls **can result** in chronic pain, reduced mobility, loss of independence and even death



50% of all falls causing hospitalization **HAPPEN AT HOME**



INJURIES due to falls rose **43% between 2003 and 2008**



DEATHS due to falls rose **65% between 2003 and 2008**

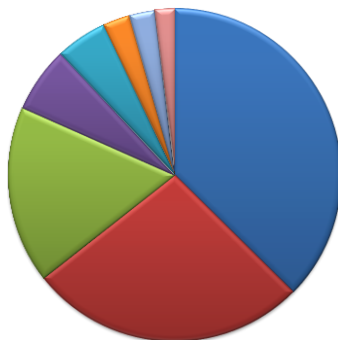
(Government of Canada, 2016; PHAC, 2014; Kuran, 2016)



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Fall-Related Injuries & the Older Adult



- Broken or fractured bones 37.3%
- Sprain or strain 27%
- Scrape, bruise or blister 17.2%
- Other 6.4%
- Cut or puncture (open wound) 5%
- Concussion or brain injury 2.6%
- Dislocation 2.5%
- Multiple Injuries 1.9%

Falls are cited as the cause of **78% of traumatic brain injury (TBI) hospitalizations for Canadians over the age of 60.** (Kuran, 2016)

(PHAC, 2015)



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Activities Related to Older Adult Falls



- Walking on surface other than snow or ice 45.2%
- Walking on snow or ice 15.5%
- Going up or down stairs/steps 11.8%
- Due to health problems 7.1%
- From furniture / rising from furniture 5.8%
- Engaged in sport / physical exercise 5.3%
- Other 5.1%
- From elevated position 4.2%

(PHAC, 2015)

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