

EXTENDED CARE LINK

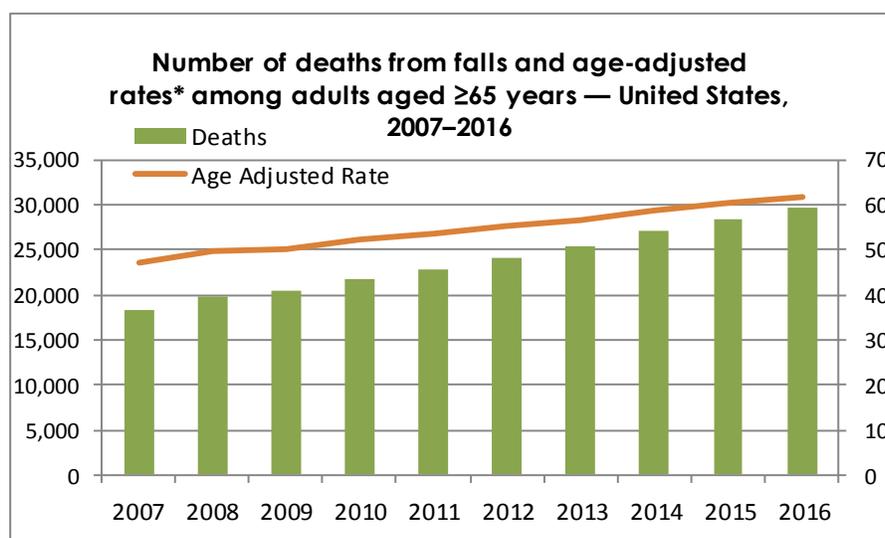
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Deaths Related to Falls are on the Rise

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) releases a weekly Morbidity and Mortality Report. Included in the May 11, 2018 report was statistics related to deaths from falls among persons ≥ 65 from 2007-2016. The CDC indicated in their report that falls account for the largest percentage of deaths from unintentional injuries which is the seventh leading cause of death in older adults.¹

According to the CDC, deaths from falls in persons 65 years or greater increased 31% from 2007-2016, increasing at a average rate of 3.0% per year. In 2016, Alabama had the lowest rate of falls at 24.4 per 100,000 while Wisconsin had the highest rate at 142.7 per 100,000.² The rate of deaths from falls for those 85 years or older is increasing at a rate of 3.9% per year.³ The CDC estimates that if the current rate continues to increase, an estimated 59,000 fall-related deaths could occur in those persons age 65 or older in 2030.⁴

Reducing falls has long been a goal in long-term care facilities and has been on the



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death 1999-2016 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released December, 2017. Data are from the Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999-2016, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program.

CMS radar for some time. CMS defines a falls "...as unintentionally coming to rest on the ground, floor, or other lower level but not as a result of an overwhelming external force."⁵ It is further clarified that if a resident loses their balance and would have fallen had someone not intervened or the resident had not caught themselves then it would still be considered a fall."⁶ When a resident is found on the floor, a fall is considered to have occurred unless there is evidence to the contrary.⁷

Reducing the number of injuries from falls begins with prevention. While not inclusive, the following list identifies risk factors that when identified and where possible, mitigated, may reduce a resident's risk for falling.

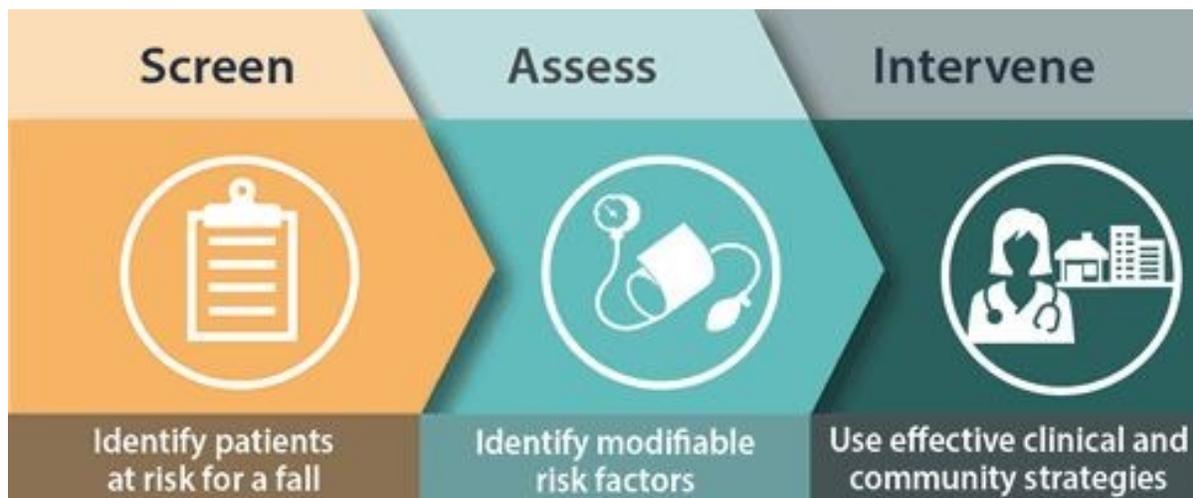
- Underlying chronic medical conditions
- Acute change in condition
- Medication side effects
- Orthostatic hypotension
- Lower extremity weakness
- Balance disorders
- Poor grip strength
- Functional Impairments
- Gait disorders
- Cognitive impairment
- Visual deficits
- Pain
- Incontinence ⁸



The CDC has a fall reduction initiative based upon the American and British Geriatric Societies' clinical practice guideline and is referred to as STEADI (Stopping elderly accidents, deaths & injuries).⁹ The initiative consists of three core elements; screen, assess, and intervene.

STEADI **Stopping Elderly Accidents, Deaths & Injuries**

A toolkit is available for health care workers and contains a flow chart for fall risk screening, assessment and intervention; directions on how to standardize functional assessments, information on medication risk factors and management, a pocket guide for preventing falls, a fact sheet and a wall chart that integrates prevention and practice. Also available is an algorithm for fall risk screening, assessment and intervention. The toolkit and other resources are available at https://www.cdc.gov/steady/pdf/steady_tool_kit_materials_handout-a.pdf



Several other resources are available that can be used to develop a fall prevention program and are located in the **Resources** section at the end.

Recent statistics from the CDC indicate that deaths from falls in older adults are on the rise. The focus on reducing falls is not new, but the recent statistics illustrating a 3% per year rise in



the fall-related death rates is alarming. Healthcare workers have the opportunity to influence these numbers by implementing programs to screen older adults for risk factors and develop interventions to mitigate those risks.

Resources:

AHRQ toolkit: Preventing Falls in Hospitals

<https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/systems/hospital/fallpxtoolkit/index.html>

Joint Commission Center for Transforming Healthcare: Preventing Falls Targeted Solutions Tool® (TST)®;

https://www.centerfortransforminghealthcare.org/tst_pfi.aspx

VA National Center for Patient Safety: Implementation Guide for Fall Injury Reduction

https://www.patientsafety.va.gov/docs/fallstoolkit14/falls_implementation_%20guide%2002_2015.pdf

ECRI Institute: Falls

<https://www.ecri.org/components/HRC/Pages/SafSec2.aspx>

¹ Burns, E. & Ramakrishna, K. (2018, May 11). Deaths from falls among persons aged ≥ 65 years- United States 2007-2016. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Available from https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6718a1.htm?s_cid=mm6718a1_w

² Indem

³ Indem

⁴ Indem

⁵ CMS State Operations Manual Appendix PP, page 311. Available from https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Manuals/downloads/som107ap_pp_guidelines_ltc.pdf

⁶ Indem

⁷ Indem

⁸ Indem

⁹ Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC). STEADI: Older adult fall prevention. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/materials.html>

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