

Injuries and deaths resulting from falls can happen at any age but occur much more frequently among the elderly. In Virginia, falls are the leading cause of injury related hospitalization and injury death for the elderly (age 65 and older).

## Falls among older Virginians (age 65+), 2009

- There were 421 elderly fall-related injury deaths and 16,206 hospitalizations in 2009 in Virginia.
- Over 498 million dollars were billed for fall-related hospitalizations, for a median charge per episode of care of \$23,015.
- The average length of stay in the hospital was 5 days.
- 34% of falls were the result of the person slipping or tripping.
- Adults over the age of 75 account for 78% of elderly fall hospitalizations and 83% of fall-related deaths.

## PREVENTION TIPS:

### Fall Prevention Tips for Older Adults :

- Modify slippery surfaces and remove hazards whenever possible.
- Avoid loose rugs or use double-sided tape to keep rugs in place.
- Improve lighting in the home. Turn on the lights when entering a dark room or house.
- Place no slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Remove clutter such as magazines, books, boxes and extra furniture that can lead to tripping.
- Keep wires and cords behind furniture.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise increases strength and balance, lessening the likelihood of a fall.
- Have vision evaluated by a professional. Poor vision can increase the chances of falling.
- Install handrails and lights in staircases.
- Install grab bars next to toilets and tubs or showers.
- Review all medicines with a health care provider. As age increases, the physical effects of some medications— or combination of medicines—can change. Some of these effects can lead to falls by making a person drowsy or light headed.
- Take time to get your balance when first standing up. Being rushed or distracted greatly increases the risk of falling.
- Wear sturdy, well-fitted, low heeled shoes with non-slip soles

### Resources:

CDC – Older Adult Fall Prevention [www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/index.html)

Center for Healthy Aging [www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=69](http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=69)

**Falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalization and death for the elderly.**

Injury and Violence Prevention Program  
**Virginia Department of Health**  
1-800-732-8333  
[www.vahealth.org/injury](http://www.vahealth.org/injury)