



Introduction to the Older Adults Falls Prevention Survey, 2012

Background

Falls are a health concern for older adults. In Ottawa, each year 6,300 seniors aged 65 years and older visit the emergency room for a fall and close to 1,700 are hospitalized. Falls lead to 70 deaths of Ottawa seniors every year.^(1 2 3) Many falls are preventable.

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is leading a *Falls Prevention Strategy*, a 3-year community wide multi-faceted initiative to engage and support seniors to promote healthy living and reduce their risk of falls. The *Falls Prevention Strategy* has three main initiatives: a falls awareness campaign, falls screening clinics, and the Older Adults Falls Prevention Survey. In 2012, OPH conducted the Older Adults Falls Prevention Survey by telephone with 1,050 Ottawa adults aged 65 years and older living at home. The survey was designed to fill a gap in local data on the key falls prevention behaviours that seniors can adopt to reduce their risk of falls, as supported in the current literature and endorsed by OPH.⁽⁴⁻⁷⁾ OPH's key messages for seniors regarding falls prevention are:

- Have an annual checkup:
 - Have a regular health exam with your doctor or nurse practitioner every year and report any falls
 - Review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist every year
 - Have your eyes checked every year for changes in their health and vision
- Be active:
 - Take part in at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of aerobic physical activity every week
 - Minutes count - be active in blocks of at least 10 minutes at a time
 - Do strength and balance activities like lifting weights and Tai chi at least twice a week
- Eat for healthy bones:
 - Eat 3 servings of foods high in calcium every day
 - Take a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 IU if you are over 50
- Make your home safe:
 - Keep your home well lit and free of trip hazards
 - Remove scatter rugs and loose carpets
 - Add secure grab bars in bathroom
 - Install sturdy handrails that extend to the bottom on both sides of your stairs

The fact sheets and infographics are intended to help service providers who work with older adults to tailor awareness and education campaigns on preventing falls, to support client education, and to inform program priorities and policy development. A description of OPH, partner and community falls prevention services are included at the end of each fact sheet.

References

1. Ambulatory Emergency External Cause 2009 to 2011, National Ambulatory Care Reporting System. IntelliHEALTH. Extracted January 18, 2013. Health Planning Branch, Ontario MOHLTC. Falls (ICD-10: W00-W19)
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3. Ontario Mortality Data 2007 to 2009, IntelliHEALTH. Extracted September 14, 2012. Health Planning Branch, Ontario MOHLTC. Falls (ICD-10: W00-W19)
4. Scott, V. Fall Prevention Programming: Designing, Implementing and Evaluating Fall Prevention Programs for Older Adults. Raleigh, North Carolina: Lulu Publishing, 2012.
5. The American Geriatrics Society. AGS/BGS Clinical Practice Guideline: *Prevention of Falls in Older Persons*. [cited May 2013]. Available from: http://americangeriatrics.org/health_care_professionals/clinical_practice/clinical_guidelines_recommendations/prevention_of_falls_summary_of_recommendations
6. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines For Older Adults – 65 Years & Older. [cited May 2013]. Available from: http://www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_older-adults_en.pdf
7. Health Canada. Vitamin D and Calcium: Updated Dietary Reference Intakes. [cited May 2013]. Available from: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/vitamin/vita-d-eng.php>