

Falls in Primary Care

Falls are Common

Over the next 12 months:

- ✦ 35% of your patients age 65 and above will fall at least once
- ✦ 40% of your patients age 80 and above will fall at least once

Falls are Costly

Over the next 12 months:

- ✦ 25% of seniors who fall will sustain serious injuries or death
- ✦ 20% of seniors who sustain a hip fracture will die within one year
- ✦ 40% of all nursing home admissions are due to falls
- ✦ 72% of seniors who fall will receive medical treatment within 48 hours
- ✦ A 20% reduction in falls would translate to an estimated 7,500 fewer hospitalizations and 1800 fewer permanently disabled seniors. The overall national savings could amount to \$ 1.38 billion annually

Falls are Complex

Falls result from complex interactions between multiple risk factors:

Biological/Medical	Behavioural	Environmental
Lower extremity weakness Balance / gait problems Visual deficits Acute or chronic illness Decreased sensation Depression Hearing loss Dizziness / postural hypotension Foot problems Cognitive impairment Functional/ADL impairment	Certain medications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psychotropics/Benzodiazepines ▪ Digoxin ▪ Diuretics ▪ Class 1a anti-arrhythmics Polypharmacy (5 or more) History of falls** Improper footwear Excessive alcohol use: ≥14 / wk Fear of falling Risk-taking behaviours	Stairs Home hazards Outdoor hazards Public / community hazards Use of assistive device

Falls are Preventable

Primary care providers can significantly decrease the fall risk of their elderly patients by:

- ✦ Screening for fall risk once a year
 - ✦ Conducting a high quality falls assessment to identify causes and risk factors
- Implementing multidisciplinary management strategies that target modifiable risk factors

Information for this Info Sheet obtained from the following resources:

Division of Aging and Seniors (2005). *Report on seniors' falls in Canada*. Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Public Health Agency of Canada. Ottawa, Ontario. Retrieved, July 4, 2008, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/pubs/seniors_falls/index.htm.

Laird, R.D. and Robinson, B.E. (Eds) (2006). Falls in older adults: Evaluation and management in primary practice (3r Ed). In Tool Kit 4: *The Practising Physician Education Project Tools for the Evaluation and Management of Geriatric Patients in Primary Practice*. Supported by the Merck Institute of Aging and Health. Retrieved, July 4, 2008, from <http://www.gericareonline.net/tools/eng/falls/index.html>.