

PREVENTING FALLS IN WORKING AGE ADULTS



Why Do Falls Matter?

A Fall Changed My Life



“You don’t realize how precious your independence is until it’s gone,” says Daria, a 53-year-old Baltimore County resident. “While rushing to pack for vacation, I tripped over a rug that I had folded and put on the floor rather than storing it in a closet. I grabbed a door to stop my fall. That resulted in a shoulder muscle tear that required surgery.”

“The months after the surgery proved even more challenging than the surgery itself,” Daria explains. “I wore a sling for eight weeks. Daily activities like dressing, bathing, and putting on a seat belt made me dependent on others.” After surgery, Daria did physical therapy three times a week for two months. “The therapy caused considerable pain and discomfort,” she recalls.

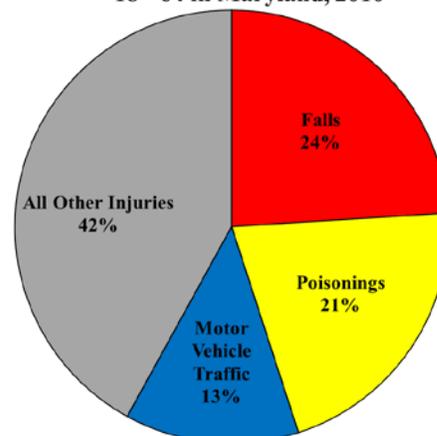
Her fall also cost her time and money. “I lost time from my job, in doctor’s appointments and physical therapy,” Daria recalls. “There were the expenses for co-pays and medications. I was lucky to only have one injury as a result of falling!” Unfortunately, her fall has caused some permanent changes in her activities. “I won’t walk the dog on rainy days,” she explains. “I can’t lift heavy items, and I need help with my housework and gardening.”

Daria’s experience has changed how she thinks and acts in her home environment. She has learned to be proactive in preventing another fall. “I am more aware of those things that could cause another fall,” she says. “I always wear my shoes now, and I have become much more aware of having clear walking spaces in my home. Most of all, I do not delay taking steps to keep me and my family safe from preventable falls like the one I experienced.”

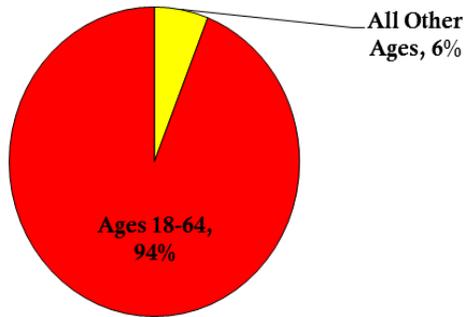
The Effects of Falls in Maryland Working Adults, Ages 18 – 64 Years in 2010:

- Falls are the leading cause of hospitalizations for Marylanders ages 35- 64 years, the third leading cause for ages 25-34 years, and the fourth leading cause for ages 18-24 years.³
- Falls caused more hospitalizations in working adults than motor vehicle crashes.
- Falls were the leading cause of emergency room visits for working adults.³

Injury-related Hospitalizations for ages 18 - 64 in Maryland, 2010



Fall-Related IWIF Insurance Claims, 2010



- Nearly one third of all falls resulting in hospitalizations in Maryland occurred in working adults.³
- Working adults spent over **32,100 days** in the hospital due to falls.³ That's more than 87 years of time lost from work and family responsibilities.
- Every day in 2010, more than **197** working adults were treated in emergency departments and another **20** people were hospitalized, due to falls.³
- **Falls are also costly.** IWIF reported that claims involving falls accounted for over **\$31 million**, which could pay for 620 workers' annual salary of \$50,000; and working age adults accounted for approximately 94% of those costs in Maryland.⁵
- Working adults accounted for over \$110 million in fall-related

hospitalizations, which is the same as the cost to build the Orioles Camden Yards Stadium, slightly over 24% of the total hospital costs for this age group. Additionally, working adults accounted for over \$37 million in emergency room costs for fall-related injuries, 24% of the total emergency room costs for this age group.³

Risk Factors for Falls in Working Age Adults:

- ✓ Wet, icy, or oily surfaces
- ✓ Frayed carpeting or rugs
- ✓ Smooth but potentially slick floor surfaces
- ✓ Items dropped on floors
- ✓ Makeshift step stools
- ✓ Spilled water, coffee, or other liquids
- ✓ Boxes or other items placed in high-traffic areas
- ✓ Loose electrical cords, phone lines, or extension cords in the walkway
- ✓ Loose flooring, mats, or tiles
- ✓ Newly mopped and/or waxed floors
- ✓ Drawers left open
- ✓ Objects left on stairways
- ✓ Worn stair treads
- ✓ Long, loose pant hems or cuffs
- ✓ Insufficient lighting, especially poorly lighted steps
- ✓ Machine parts obstructing walkways or protruding from shelves

What can you do in your community to prevent falls?

- Join the statewide injury prevention coalition "Partnership for a Safer Maryland" to stay updated on the issue.
- Familiarize yourself with available resources by visiting www.safermaryland.org.
- Promote awareness of injuries related to falls in your community and evidence-based intervention programs.
- Build a local group to prevent falls.

REFERENCES

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2. *Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2010*. U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor
3. Unpublished Data from the Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission Hospital Discharge Dataset, July 2012
4. *Maryland Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries*, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2008.
5. *Preventing Slips, Trips, and Falls*. Injured Workers Insurance Fund, 2010.

For More Information, visit our website: (www.safermaryland.org)

