

Ohio Department of Health

246 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
www.odh.ohio.gov

Ted Strickland, Governor
Alvin D. Jackson, M.D., Director



N E W S

Office of Public Affairs
Robert Jennings, Director

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ODH REPORT: NONFATAL FALLS COST OHIOANS \$6.2 BILLION ANNUALLY

Older Ohioans at greatest risk for fall-related injury and death

COLUMBUS – Nonfatal, hospital-admitted falls cost the State of Ohio more than \$6.2 billion annually in medical costs, lost wages and decreased quality of life, according to *The Burden of Injury from Unintentional Falls in Ohio, 2002-2005*, a report issued today by the Office of Healthy Ohio (OHO). Of this, \$488 million was in medical costs; lost wages added up to \$526 million, while decreased quality of life accounted for \$5.2 billion, according to the report.

Falls disproportionately impact older Ohioans, who represent Ohio’s fastest-growing population. And because the consequences of a fall increase dramatically with age, fall-prevention efforts are more important than ever, said Ohio Department of Health (ODH) Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D.

Consider the following fall-related facts about Ohioans 65 and older:

- They accounted for more than 90 percent of all fall-related hip fractures.
- Fall-related emergency room-visit and inpatient hospitalization rates are higher than all other injuries combined for this age group.
- They accounted for \$4.2 billion, more than two-thirds (68 percent), of the total annual costs of nonfatal, hospital-admitted falls.
- In 2005, this group accounted for 81 percent of fall-related deaths and represented only 13 percent of the population.
- The 515 deaths among this group in 2002 are expected to rise to nearly 900 in 2009.

“Falls are not a normal part of aging,” Jackson said. “This myth must be dispelled so older Ohioans can live strong, independent, productive and healthy lives.”

The report – available at <http://www.healthyohioprogram.org> – analyzes data from the Ohio Hospital Association and outlines steps older Ohioans can take to help prevent falls.

- Exercise regularly; Tai Chi, which increases strength and balance, is especially effective.
- Review medicines – both prescription and over the counter – to reduce side effects and interactions.
- Have annual eye exams.
- Reduce hazards at home.

Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Web site for a *Home Fall Prevention Checklist*: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/fallsmaterial.htm#BRochures>. Other prevention resources are available from the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm>.

Housed at ODH, OHO is part of Gov. Ted Strickland’s Turnaround Ohio initiative and consists of three core areas: health promotion, disease prevention and health equity.

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Contact: Ohio Department of Health – Office of Public Affairs (614) 644-8562