

Falls among older adults are a serious public health issue in Canada

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations and injury deaths among Canadians aged 65 or older.

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Statistics

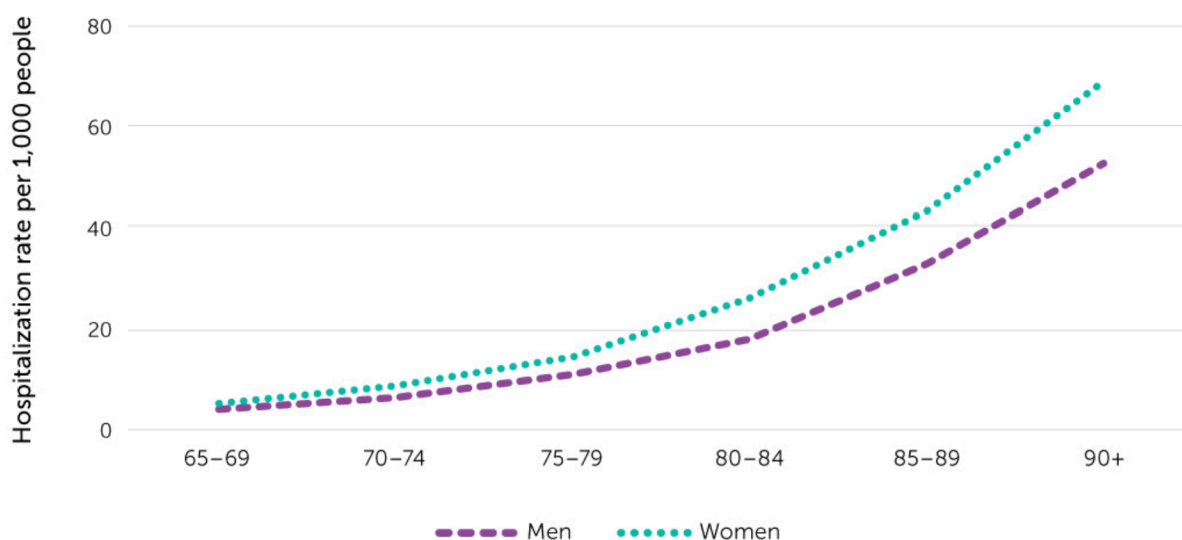
Recent studies show that falls cause an estimated 80% of seniors' injury-related hospitalizations, 90% of all hip fractures, 2 billion dollars a year in direct healthcare costs, and over one-third of seniors are admitted to long-term care following hospitalization for a fall.

The average Canadian older adult had to stay in the hospital ten days longer for falls than for any other cause.

The prevalence of fall-related injuries was higher among older women than men and among those aged 80 or older compared with 65 to 79-year-olds.

Fortunately, most falls and fall-related injuries among older adults are preventable.

Figure 12. Fall-related hospitalization rates, by age and sex, population aged 65 or older, Canada (Quebec not included), 2019/2020



source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/surveillance-report-falls-older-adults-canada.html#a2.1>

Best Practices for Preventing Falls:

- 1) Appropriately utilizing assistive devices such as anti-slip shoes is crucial for individuals with gait and balance challenges. Seeking clinical expertise for the proper evaluation of equipment is advised.
- 2) Appropriate treatment of medical conditions, such as visual problems, cardiovascular disorders, and hypotension, has been shown to reduce the risk of falls.
- 3) Education for older adults and their caregivers is crucial for implementing and maintaining fall prevention strategies, such as exercise programs, improved nutrition, safe transfer into the bathtub, and learning to use mobility devices.
- 4) For older adults with mobility or sensory impairments or those at risk of falling, it is advisable for a healthcare professional to conduct an **assessment of their**

environment to identify necessary modifications as part of a multifaceted intervention.

5) **Exercise** is essential for older individuals and should be part of a multifaceted approach. Targeting balance, gait, and strength training is effective. Physical activity can reduce muscle loss associated with aging and improve mobility, physical function, bone density, and balance.

6) It is important to have regular reviews and medication adjustments under the supervision of a physician or pharmacist. This can effectively reduce the risk of falls. Certain psychotropic drugs, such as those taken for sleep, **anxiety, or depression**, significantly increase the risk of falls.

7) **Good nutrition** is essential for maintaining good health, especially for older adults who need enough protein to maintain muscle strength and stay hydrated. Researchers have found that vitamin D combined with calcium reduces the risk of falls and that this impact is most profound when an older person is deficient in vitamin D.

8) All vision concerns or problems should be professionally evaluated, and any correctable visual issues, especially cataracts, should be treated. Seniors with chronic eye diseases like age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy can be referred to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for vision rehabilitation services, helping them develop orientation and mobility skills for safe navigation.

Summary

By 2040, older adults are projected to make up one-quarter of Canada's population. The pace of growth of the group aged 85 or older is expected to be particularly steep. Therefore, it is essential to minimize the burden of falls among Canadian older adults.

sources:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/seniors-falls-canada-second-report.html>

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