

# SENIORS FALL PREVENTION

BC Falls Prevention Awareness Week (November 1-7, 2010)

## Reduction in Falls:

- An environmental scan of fall and fall-related injury prevention programs in Canada revealed a significant increase in the number of initiatives compared to earlier scans, about a 150% increase since 2001
- There is a greater focus on peer mentoring, where seniors educate other seniors on fall prevention.
- A total of 34.5% of these programs were implemented between Jan 2009-April 2010

(Scott, V., Wagar, L., & Elliott, S. (2010). Falls & Related Injuries among Older Canadians: Fall-related Hospitalizations & Intervention Initiatives. Prepared on behalf of the Public Health Agency of Canada, Division of Aging and Seniors. Victoria BC: Victoria Scott Consulting)

## Effective Interventions:

- Supervised exercise programmes, such as tai chi, as well as prescribed individual exercise target stability, flexibility and strength that may decrease the chance of falls
- Medication should be assessed on a regular basis as some medications can increase the rate of falling
- People that are at a high risk of falling may benefit from home safety interventions

(Gillespie LD, Robertson MC, Gillespie WJ, Lamb SE, Gates S, Cumming RG, Rowe BH. Interventions for preventing falls in older people living in the community. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2009, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD007146. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD007146.pub2.)

Data Sources:

**Deaths:** BC Vital Statistics Agency,  
**Hospitalizations:** Discharge Abstract Database, Ministry of Health Services.

“Seniors’ Fall Prevention Awareness Week” is an annual event proclaimed by the government of BC that occurs during the first week of November. The purpose of this event is to raise awareness and education around the prevention of falls and fall-related injuries among older adults and encourage leadership and collaboration among health authorities across the province. For details of the events planned in your area, please visit the BCIRPU at [www.injuryresearch.bc.ca](http://www.injuryresearch.bc.ca).



## Data on Falls in British Columbia:

- In 2007, there were a total of 280 deaths from falls with the highest number among ages 85+
- In 2009/2010, there were a total of 12,006 fall-related hospital cases for individuals over the age of 65, with a number of cases among females over the age of 70 years

## Suggestions:

### How to Decrease Your Risk of Falling:

- Maintain an active and healthy lifestyle through appropriate exercise, good nutrition, regular physical checkups, and eye and ear exams
- If you have difficulty with your mobility outside the home, ask your physiotherapist for an in-home exercise program to fit your needs
- For those who are active outside the home, exercises to promote balance, strength and endurance are best for reducing falls
- Avoid rushing or carrying too much
- Consult a physiotherapist or occupational therapist on the appropriate use of mobility aids and safety devices, such as a cane with spiked ends or shoes with ice grips
- Wear footwear that provides good support, with soles that have non-slip treads and are not too thick
- Have your family doctor or pharmacist do a regular review of your medications
- Be socially active by joining a community group and getting together with friends or family

## Resources:

- “Seniors’ Falls Can Be Prevented” factsheet, BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit (BCIRPU).
- Falls Prevention, BCIRPU.
- The BC Health and Seniors’ Information Line: 1-800-465-4911 or [www.seniorsbc.ca](http://www.seniorsbc.ca)
- Centre of Excellence on Mobility, Fall Prevention and Injury in Aging ([www.hiphealth.ca/CEMFIA](http://www.hiphealth.ca/CEMFIA))
- Senior’s Health, Public Health Agency of Canada