

Information for Action # 2011-7

Nonfatal fall-related injuries disproportionately affect the health of older women.

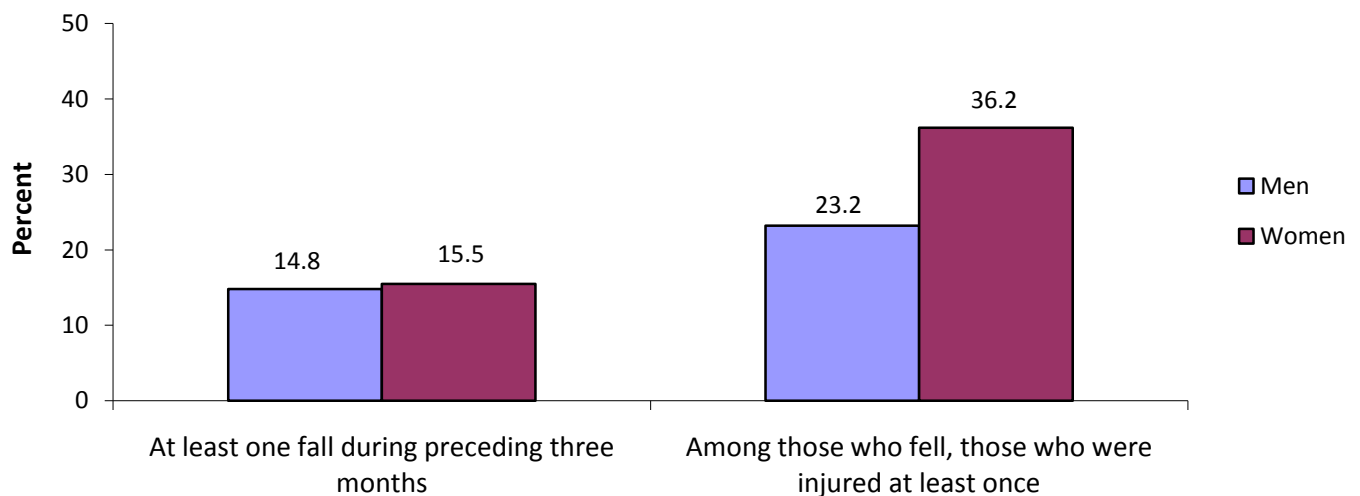
Quick facts:

- Falls in older adults are the leading cause of injury deaths, hospitalizations, and emergency department visits in New York State. Each year, an average of 900 residents aged 65 years or older die from injuries sustained from falling, and more than 132,000 fall-related incidents result in injuries requiring hospital treatment.¹
- There is no significant difference between the proportion of women and men who experience falls (15.5% vs. 14.8%), but women who fall are more likely than men who fall to report fall-related injuries (36.2% vs. 23.2%) (see Figure).

Public health importance:

- Nonfatal fall-related injuries disproportionately affect the health and quality of life of older women, who comprise 58% of the US population over age 65 years.²
- Fall injury rates increase sharply with age,³ and these injuries are associated with significant morbidity, reduced mobility, decreased functioning, and loss of independence.⁴

Percentage of NYS Adults Aged 65 Years or Older Who Reported Falls and Fall-related Injuries During the Preceding Three Months, by Sex, 2006 and 2008



Data Source: NYS Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, combined 2006 & 2008

PUBLIC HEALTH OPPORTUNITY

Falls among older adults can be reduced through evidence-based fall-prevention programs that address modifiable risk factors for falls such as muscle weakness, gait and balance problems, poor vision, use of psychoactive medications, and home hazards.

Contact:

For more information about the data included and their specific implications for action, please send an email to DCDIPIFA@health.state.ny.us with the IFA # 7 in the subject line.

References:

- New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Injury Prevention. Vital Statistics Death Files and Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System.
- Steven JA, Sogolow ED. Gender differences for non-fatal unintentional fall related injuries among older adults. *Injury Prevention*. 2005;11:115-119.
- Peel NM, Dassulke DJ, McClure RF. Population based study of hospitalized fall related injuries in older people. *Injury Prevention*. 2002;8:280-283.
- Sterling DA, O'Connor JA, Bonadies J. Geriatric falls: injury severity is high and disproportionate to mechanism. *Journal of Trauma*. 2001;50:116-119.