

Fall Prevention Fact Sheet

Virginia 2007

Injuries and deaths resulting from falls can occur to both the young and old. In Virginia falls are the leading cause of injury related hospitalization and the leading cause of injury death.

Falls in Virginia, 2007

- There were 461 fall-related injury deaths and 18,671 hospitalizations in 2007 in Virginia.
- Over 495 million dollars were billed for fall-related hospitalizations, for a median charge per episode of care of \$19,441.
- The average length of stay in the hospital was 5 days.
- 76% of all fall hospitalized injuries resulted in a fracture.
- Falls from playground equipment accounted for 14% of hospitalizations for 1-4 year olds and 29% for 5-9 year olds.
- 71% of all unintentional fall injury hospitalizations occurred among the elderly over the age of 65.

PREVENTION TIPS:

For Infants and Children:

- Never leave babies alone on any furniture, including beds, tables, sofas, or cribs and changing tables with the guardrails down — even if they have never rolled over before. Instead put babies on the floor or in a crib with secured guardrails.
- More children are injured with baby walkers than with any other nursery product. Baby walkers allow children to access stairways and areas of the home that may result in a fall.
- Install gates at top and bottom of stairs until children can climb up and down safely.
- Move chair, cribs, beds and other furniture away from windows. Children can quickly climb to window ledges or sills, and fall. Children can fall from windows opened as little as 5 inches.
- Safely secure windows with window guards or window stops.
- Install window guards or stops to keep children from falling out of windows. Window screens are not designed to prevent falls. If you need to open windows, open them from the top—not the bottom.
- As babies get older and learn to sit and pull up to a standing position, lower the mattress in the crib. You should stop using the crib as soon as the top rails are less than 3/4 of the child's height.
- Modify slippery surfaces and remove hazards whenever possible.
- Secure area rugs and throw rugs by using nonskid backing.
- Select play equipment that is safe for young children such as equipment that keeps children low to the ground.

For Older Adults:

- Keep bathroom lights on.
- Install grab bars.
- Avoid loose rugs.
- Remove clutter.
- Keep wires behind furniture.
- Gait training or balance training, along with muscle strengthening, can help to prevent falls.

Falls are the leading cause of injury hospitalization for infants and children 0-14 years old and adults 45 and over.

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