

Fracture Related Injuries in Virginia, 2002-2006

- ◆ 94,818 fracture related hospitalizations occurred during the five year period. 91,293 (96%) were unintentional.
- ◆ 58% of those injured were female and 80% were white, Non-Hispanic.
- ◆ The leading causes of fracture injuries were falls (68%) and motor vehicle traffic crashes (17%).
- ◆ Injury rates were highest among the elderly 75 and older (1,915.4 per 100,000).
- ◆ More than 2.2 billion in charges resulted from unintentional fracture related hospitalizations.

General Prevention Tips

The following prevention tips can help prevent fracture related injuries:

- Modify slippery surfaces and remove hazards whenever possible.
- Secure area rugs and throw rugs by using a non-skid backing.
- Improve the lighting in your home. Turn on the lights when entering your house at night.
- Install handrails and lights in staircases.
- Install grab bars next to your toilet and your tub or shower.
- Use no slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Remove clutter.
- Keep wires behind furniture.
- Gait training or balance training, along with muscle strengthening, can help to prevent falls.
- Begin regular exercise program. Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce falls because it increases strength and agility, lessening the likelihood of a fall.
- Never leave babies alone on any furniture, including beds, tables, sofas, or cribs and changing tables (with the guard-rails down).
- Install gates at the top and bottom of all stairs until children can climb up and down safely.
- Move chairs, 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 few as five inches.
- Safely secure windows with window guards or window stops to keep children from falling out windows. Window screens are not designed to prevent falls. If you need to open windows, open them from the top—not the bottom.
- Always wear a seat belt, even on short trips. The lap belt should lay across the lower hips and touch the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should lay across the collarbone, cross the middle of the chest and not touch the neck. Proper positioning is important because it will allow the crash forces to be applied to the stronger bones in the body that are better able to withstand such forces.
- Avoid dangerous driving behaviors such as driving under the influence, driving while distracted, speeding, ignoring lights and signs and driving aggressively.

Virginia Fracture Case:

An 82 year old woman, who lived alone, was walking down the dark basement stairs when she missed the last step and fell forward (the light switch for the basement was located at the bottom of the stairs). She struck her head on the dryer and landed on the floor. She was able to activate her emergency alert button and EMS arrived within 5 minutes of the fall. She suffered a fracture to her right cheek bone and a right femoral neck fracture. She spent 3 days in the acute care hospital followed by 7 days in an inpatient rehabilitation hospital. She returned home with assistance from her daughter who came in from out of state. Outpatient physical therapy was required for another 6 weeks to help the woman regain her independence.

Resources:

- ◆ Division of Injury and Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health
www.vahealth.org/civp/
- ◆ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/default.html
- ◆ American Academy of Family Physicians
www.familydoctor.org
- ◆ National Safety Council
www.nsc.org/
- ◆ National Institute on Aging
www.nia.nih.gov
- ◆ Safe Kids USA
www.usa.safekids.org/

Division of Injury and Violence Prevention
Virginia Department of Health
1-800-732-8333
www.vahealth.org/civp