

Falls:

A Serious Safety Concern for Older Arizonans



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Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition

Safety Workshop

Municipal Aging Services Project:

Planning for the Next 100 Years

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William



Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition

- Born in late 2008 out of the Governor's Office on Aging
- Funded by a grant from the Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust.
- Now coordinated by the Area Agency on Aging, Region One



Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition

- 70 members from local professionals dedicated to reducing the risk of falls by older Arizonans through **education, awareness, and outreach**



Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition

- **Mission**

- *The mission of the AZ Fall Prevention Coalition is to reduce the risk of falls by older Arizonans through education, awareness, and outreach focused on three essentials of fall prevention: medication management, physical activity, and home and environment modification.*

- **More info at: www.azstopfalls.org**



Objectives

- Discuss the significance of the problem
- Primary risk factors associated with falls
- Key fall prevention strategies
 - Physical activity
 - Medication management
 - Home modification
- Discuss national and local community resources



Magnitude of the Problem



Magnitude of the Problem

- One out of three adults age 65 and older falls each year. ^{1,2}
- Among older adults (those 65 or older), falls are the leading cause of injury death. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. ³
- In 2008, over 19,700 older adults died from unintentional fall injuries. ³



Magnitude of the Problem

- The death rates from falls among older men and women have risen sharply over the past decade.⁴
- In 2009, 2.2 million nonfatal fall injuries among older adults were treated in EDs and more than 581,000 of these patients were hospitalized.³
- In 2000, direct medical costs of falls totaled a little over \$19 billion—\$179 million for fatal falls and \$19 billion for nonfatal fall injuries.⁵



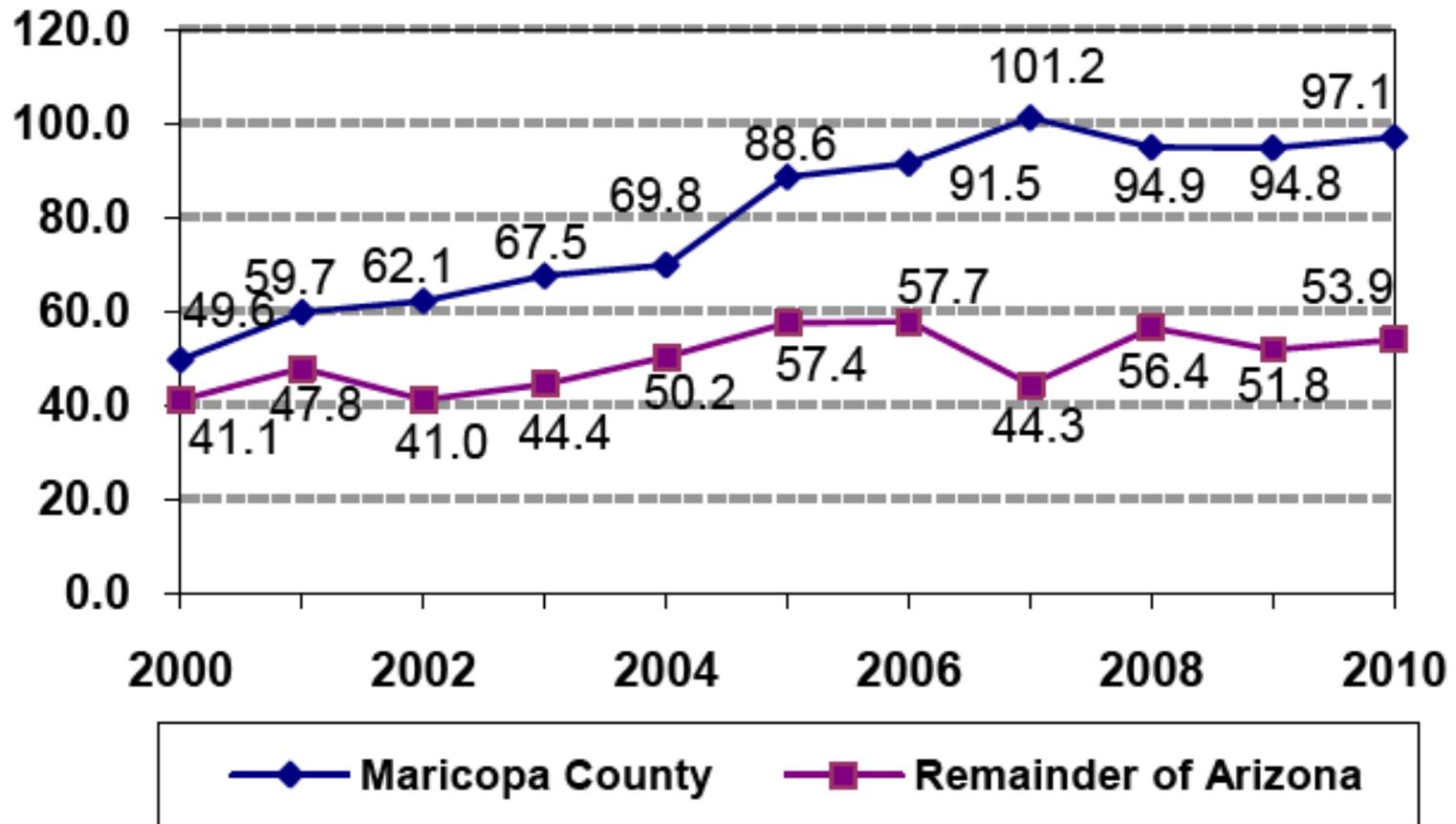
No Small Problem in Arizona

- In 2007, Arizona ranked 8th in the nation for unintentional fall-related deaths among adults age 65 years and older.⁶
- In 2010, falls accounted for 71 percent of unintentional injury deaths among older adult residents of Maricopa County (n=449).
- 6,622 inpatient hospitalizations and 14,670 emergency department visits due to non-fatal unintentional fall-related injuries among older adult residents of Maricopa County.



No Small Problem in Arizona

Mortality Rates (per 100,000) of Falls Among Adults Ages 65 and Older, Maricopa vs. Remainder of Arizona, 2000-2010



Risk Factors for Falls



Risk Factors for Falls – Intrinsic^{7,8}

- Muscle weakness, particularly in the legs
- Poor balance and difficulty walking
- Postural hypotension or drop in blood pressure with change in position (lightheadedness, dizziness)



Risk Factors for Falls – Intrinsic^{7,8}

- Vision problems (e.g. poor depth perception, cataracts, glaucoma, adjusting from light to dark environment)
- Slowed reflexes/reaction time
- Sensory problems
- Confusion



Risk Factors for Falls – Extrinsic^{7,8}

- Environmental hazards
 - Poor lighting
 - Poorly maintained walkways (e.g. cracks in sidewalk)
 - Slick surfaces (e.g. flooring, ice, water)
 - Loose rugs
 - Clutter
 - No stair railings
 - No grab bars in shower

More than half of falls occur in the home



Risk Factors for Falls – Extrinsic^{7,8}

- Poor footwear (e.g. flip flops, leather soles, high heels)
- Multiple prescription medicines
 - Four or more increases risk for falls



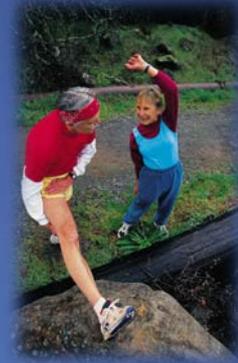
Risk Factors for Falls – Extrinsic⁷

- Drugs that may increase risk
 - **Sedative-hypnotic and anxiolytic drugs** (especially long-acting benzodiazepines)
 - **Tricyclic antidepressants/anti-psychotics**
 - **Major tranquilizers** (phenothiazines and butyrophenones)
 - Antihypertensive drugs
 - Cardiac medications
 - Corticosteroids
 - Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
 - Anticholinergic drugs
 - Hypoglycemic agents
 - Any medication that is likely to affect balance



Key Fall Prevention Strategies

Physical Activity



Medication Management



Home Modification



Physical Activity

- “Regular physical activity is a first line of defense against falls...”⁸
- Consistent, regular physical activity will improve:
 - Muscular strength
 - Balance
 - Coordination
 - Stamina
 - Flexibility



Physical Activity

- A regular physical activity program should consist of the following types of exercise:
 - **Strength** (e.g. resistance or weight lifting)
 - **Flexibility** (e.g. static and dynamic stretching)
 - **Aerobic/endurance/general conditioning** (e.g. walking)
 - **Balance** (e.g. static and dynamic)
 - **Meditation** (e.g. Tai Chi, Yoga)



Medication Management⁹

- For some people, different **medications** can lead to **drowsiness, dizziness or feeling lightheaded**; all of which can **affect balance** and **increase risk** of falling.
- **Multiple** (four or more) medications can lead to an **increased risk** for falls



Medication Management⁹

- Older adults should **talk with pharmacist or doctor** about possible side effects, to determine how one can best limit risk of a fall related injury.
- **Request a “brown-bag check-up”**
 - Gather all of current medications and over-the-counter products into a "brown-bag" and show them to doctor or pharmacist so he/she can look for any potential problems.



Home Modification⁹

- **Home Modifications** are a critical part of ensuring older adults' safety from falls.
- **Simple and easy** such as removing rugs that one is tripping on or plugging in a night light
- More extensive and costly such as **installing grab bars** in the shower or stair railing
- Several resources are provided under the "Home Modification" section of the AZFPC website



Resources



National Resources

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** – “Focus on Preventing Falls”
(<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/OlderAmericans/>)
- **CDC , Injury Prevention and Control, Home and Recreational Safety, “Falls – Older Adults”**
(<http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls>)
- **NIH Senior Health, “Falls and Older Adults”**
(<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/toc.html>)
- **National Safety Council, “Protecting Ourselves from Slips, Trip, and Falls”**
(http://www.nsc.org/safety_home/Resources/Pages/Falls.aspx)

Local Resources

- **Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition (AZFPC)**
- **Evidence-based** fall prevention programs
 - A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls, offered in various community centers and organizations in Maricopa County
- **Annual National Falls Prevention Awareness Day** hosted by the AZFPC (1st day of Fall)
- **Rebuilding Together**, Valley of the Sun, Senior Fall Prevention Services
(<http://www.rebuildingtogetherphx.org/programs-events/sfps/>) 480.774.0237

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Thank you!

