



# Falls Free™

**Volume 4, Number 1**  
**January 17, 2008**

Click below for a free subscription to the Falls Free Enews, and join the 350 health, wellness, and aging services professionals who have access to this convenient and useful resource.

*The Falls Free™ Coalition is a group of national organizations and state coalitions working to reduce the growing number of falls and fall-related injuries among older adults. For more information, go to [www.healthyagingprograms.org](http://www.healthyagingprograms.org). Produced by the National Council on Aging's Center for Healthy Aging, with support from the Archstone Foundation and the Home Safety Council, the Falls Free™ E-Newsletter is designed to enhance communications among Falls Free™ Coalition members. Newsletters will be posted on the Center's Web site [www.healthyagingprograms.org](http://www.healthyagingprograms.org)*

## FROM THE COALITION

### Ongoing Support for Falls Free™ Initiative

The National Council on Aging (NCOA) is pleased to announce a new

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## IN THIS ISSUE

### FROM THE COALITION

- Ongoing Support for Falls Free Initiative
- Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research Joins Coalition
- State-Based Coalition Activities

### FROM THE LITERATURE

- Visual Field Loss Increases Risk of Falls
- Gait Variables and Falling
- Community-Based Intervention Studied
- Indicators for Falls
- Long-Term Risk of Incident Vertebral Fractures
- Identifying Women at Risk for Osteoporosis

### TOOLS YOU CAN USE

- State Coalition-Building Tool
- Publications from NCOA
- Winter Safety Tips
- New Exercise Brochures
- Social Support and Networking Site
- Report on Osteoporosis Medication
- Prevent Brain Injury Initiative
- Cost of Long-Term Care
- Patient Safety Tools
- Useful Web Sites

### PROGRAMS

- CMS E-Prescribing Proposal

public-private partnership between the [Archstone Foundation](#), the [Administration on Aging](#), and the [National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](#) to support some of the ongoing *Falls Free™* activities.

### Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research Joins Coalition

The [Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research](#) (ACICR), housed in the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta, is committed to advancing the impact of prevention, emergency response, treatment, and rehabilitation of injuries in Alberta. ACICR organized *On Solid Ground*, a community conference on seniors' falls prevention, in 2007. The electronic *Alberta Seniors' Falls Prevention Network* was established based on stakeholder feedback. Other ACICR projects include developing a provincial seniors' falls prevention awareness campaign and a Web site for falls prevention best practices, resources, and programs. Centre staff has been involved with the development of the *Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum* and the *WHO Global Report on Falls Prevention in Older Age*.

### State-Based Coalition Activities

- [California Summit on Fall Prevention](#): The [Fall Prevention Center of Excellence](#) with the support of [The Archstone Foundation](#) and the [California Wellness Foundation](#) hosted a State Summit on Fall Prevention in December. The summit was by invitation only to assure a broad constituency. Almost 150 attendees heard presentations and worked in small groups to identify policy objectives and prioritize state efforts in fall prevention. The objectives will be used to develop a state procedures document. A briefing to members of the state commission on aging followed the summit. The Fall Prevention Center of Excellence and the Archstone Foundation are coalition members.
- [Minnesota Falls Prevention Web site](#): The Minnesota Falls Prevention has launched a [Web site](#) that offers information for both older adults and professionals who work with them. Resources found in the section for professionals can help identify the risk factors for falls and the interventions to prevent them. The site also provides template articles that can be used to feed local news stories.
- [New Hampshire Falls Prevention Screenings](#): The [New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force](#) was successful in adding the requirement to conduct falls prevention screenings within the state's primary care centers. With funding from a small state grant, the task force is currently implementing falls screening training with these primary care centers.
- [North Carolina Planning Group](#): The North Carolina Division of Public Health budgeted coalition-building funds into 2008 to help lay the groundwork for a state-based falls prevention coalition. In December, the NC Fall Prevention Coalition Planning Group hosted its first meeting.
- [Washington State Falls Prevention Testimony](#): Washington State Falls Prevention representatives provided background on senior falls in Washington state and best practices for prevention at a hearing of the Governor's Long-Term Care Financing Committee. Testimony also was presented to the Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee on the community-based research findings and outcomes from Washington's four-year CDC/NCIPC falls prevention grant and its applicability to a state senior falls prevention program. The state also added a new partnership with the RSVP Directors Association, which then wrote a grant for 12 VISTA volunteers to work on local falls prevention activities.

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

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**International Conference on Aging, Disability, and Independence.** Feb. 21-23. St. Petersburg, FL.

**National Council on Aging/American Society on Aging Conference.** March 26-30, 2008. Washington, DC.

**Transforming Fall Prevention Practices Conference.** April 21-28, 2008. Clearwater Beach, FL.

**STIPDA Annual Meeting.** April 20-23, 2008. Oklahoma City, OK.

## MEMBERS OF THE FALLS FREE™ COALITION

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### National Organizations

- AARP
- Administration on Aging
- Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality
- Alliance for Aging Research
- American Academy of Audiology
- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
- American Association for Active Lifestyles and Fitness
- American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
- American Board of Internal Medicine
- American Geriatrics Society
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Optometric Association
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Podiatric Medical Association
- American Society of Consultant Pharmacists
- American Society on Aging
- Archstone Foundation
- Assisted Living Federation of America
- BC Injury Research & Prevention Unit
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Division of Physical

### FROM THE LITERATURE

#### Visual Field Loss Increases Risk of Falls

A study published in the October issue of *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science* looked at deficits in vision to see if any were more closely linked with falls than others. For each 10 percent loss in the visual field, people in the study experienced an eight percent higher chance of falling after adjustment for other risk factors for falls. The authors found that visual fields were associated with the risk of falling and concluded that people with visual field loss may benefit from mobility training to navigate the environment more safely and reduce the risk of falling.

#### Gait Variables and Falling

Researchers report in the December issue of the *Journal of Geriatric Physical Therapy* that older adults who fell demonstrated reduced walking velocity and cadence, shorter stride and step lengths, and reduced single support time during obstacle clearance when compared to non-fallers. Results suggest the examination of temporal-spatial gait characteristics may be useful in assessing an individual's ability to perform walking tasks when challenged.

#### Community-Based Intervention Studied

A 12-month community-based intervention on falls and risk factors was studied in the *Effectiveness of a Community-Based Multifactorial Intervention on Falls and Fall Risk Factors in Community-Living Older Adults: A Randomized, Controlled Trial*. Researchers found that the incidence rate of falls was 25 percent lower among those who participated in a community-based multifaceted intervention compared with a control group. The study was reported in the December issue of the *Journal of Gerontology*.

#### Indicators for Falls

A literature review published in the October issue of the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* reported that of the 15 potential quality indicators for falls, an expert panel judged 12 to be valid reflecting the current literature in this area. These indicators can potentially serve as a basis by which different providers, medical groups, and health plans can measure and compare the quality of falls care and measure changes in the quality of care delivered over time.

#### Long-Term Risk of Incident Vertebral Fractures

Researchers reported in the December 19 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* the results of a study that examined the risk of incident vertebral fracture in women. They found that low bone mineral density (BMD) and prevalent vertebral fractures are independently related to new vertebral fractures. Women with a prevalent vertebral fracture have a substantially increased absolute risk of an incident fracture, especially if they have osteoporosis diagnosed by BMD.

#### Identifying Women at Risk for Osteoporosis

The early identification of postmenopausal women at risk of fracture, followed by effective therapeutic intervention, can substantially improve patient outcomes, notes a report in the November issue of *Geriatrics*. This CME article provides a review of assessment options for primary care providers as well as therapeutic and pharmacologic treatments available. Some therapies, such as selective estrogen receptor modulators and bisphosphonates, are able to act early in the course of treatment to reduce this risk of vertebral and non-vertebral fractures.

## Activity and Nutrition

- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention & Control
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Office of the Director
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
- Easter Seals
- Home Safety Council
- International Council on Active Aging
- Lighthouse International
- Lowe's
- Meals on Wheels Association of America
- National Association for Continence
- National Association for Home Care and Hospice
- National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- National Association of State Units on Aging
- National Center for Senior's Housing Research, National Association of Home Builders Research Center
- National Council on Aging
- National Fire Protection Association
- National Governors Association
- National Indian Council on Aging
- National Institute on Aging
- National Osteoporosis Foundation
- National Safety Council
- OASIS Institute
- RAND Corporation
- Rebuilding Together
- State & Territorial Injury Prevention Directors' Association
- Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
- United Government Services
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust

## Academic Institutions

- Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research
- Atlanta VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Center
- Center for Successful Aging, California State University, Fullerton
- Graduate School of Public Health, San Diego State University
- Temple University School of Medicine - Institute on Aging
- The Texas A&M University System Aging & Health Promotion Program - Active for Life®
- UCLA School of Medicine, Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center

## TOOLS YOU CAN USE

## State Coalition-Building Tool

NCOA and the State Coalition Workgroup are completing an online resource tool that can be used to share tools, resources, and strategies among state coalitions, and to provide emerging coalitions with assistance and proven resources to help develop an effective entity. The guide is expected to be available by March, and a URL will be provided in the next issue of *Falls Free*.

## Publications from NCOA

NCOA released two new publications on the [Center for Healthy Aging](#) Web site. *Making a Difference: Progress Report on the Falls Free National Action Plan*, is a progress report that the National Advisory Group will use to help NCOA shape future directions. The *Creative Practices in Home Safety Assessment and Modification Study* offers readers 10 adaptable home safety models that are making a difference in the lives of community-dwelling older adults. The home safety document has been downloaded more than 8,000 times since being posted online two months ago.

## Winter Safety Tips

Winter is a particularly dangerous time for older adults, who run increased risks of hypothermia, injuries due to falls in ice and snow, difficulty driving in inclement weather, and other seasonal dangers. To help older people stay safe despite the cold, snow and ice, the [American Geriatrics Society \(AGS\) Foundation for Health in Aging](#) has released a comprehensive and easy-to-understand tip sheet, *Winter Safety Tips for Older Adults*. The AGS is a coalition member.

## New Exercise Brochures

The [Fall Prevention Center of Excellence](#), a coalition member, released a set of three exercise brochures designed for older adults. The illustrated, large-print materials provide information on exercises that can help individuals maintain balance, flexibility, and strength in order to prevent falls. For maximum usability, the booklets are designed in a format that enables the user to attach them to any upright surface, so they can follow along as they train. The publications, authored by Debra Rose, PhD, feature simple exercises that older adults can carry out at home.

## Social Support and Networking Site

The [National Osteoporosis Foundation \(NOF\)](#), a coalition member, launched a social support and networking site, *The Osteoporosis Community*, designed to connect people affected by osteoporosis. Membership is open to patients, caregivers, or health professionals who have a personal or professional interest in the prevention, diagnosis and/or treatment of osteoporosis.

## Report on Osteoporosis Medication

The newly released AHRQ report, *Comparative Effectiveness of Treatments To Prevent Fractures in Men and Women With Low Bone Density or Osteoporosis*, summarized the scientific evidence in 101 published articles. The report is the newest analysis from [AHRQ's Effective Health Care Program](#). The program represents an important federal effort to compare alternative treatments for significant health conditions and make the findings public. It is intended to help patients, doctors, nurses and others choose the most effective treatments.

## Prevent Brain Injury Initiative

In support of brain injury awareness month, in March the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will launch the *Help Seniors Live Better, Longer: Prevent Brain Injury* initiative. The program will raise

## State Coalitions

- Massachusetts Falls Prevention Coalition
- Michigan Falls Prevention Partnership
- Minnesota Falls Prevention Initiative
- New Hampshire Falls Risk Reduction Task Force
- Wisconsin Statewide Falls Prevention Initiative

## Other

- Bertec Corporation
- Lifeline Systems
- Sanner & Company
- The SCOOTER Store
- Thera-Band®

## WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

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Please provide us feedback on this issue. We are also looking for your suggestions for resources, fall-related activities, stories and/or news. Write to [fallsfree@ncoa.org](mailto:fallsfree@ncoa.org).

awareness about ways to prevent, recognize, and respond to fall-related traumatic brain injury in adults aged 75 and older. The primary prevention focus is on falls. Online materials will include an event planning guide, media access guide, and materials designed for consumers.

### Cost of Long-Term Care

Falls-related injuries often result in long-term care services. To help assess the cost of a nursing home, assisted living facility, or home health aide services, AARP (a coalition member) offers an [online report on average costs by state](#). The information comes from two surveys conducted by the MetLife Mature Market Institute.

### Patient Safety Tools

*Patient Safety Tools: Improving Safety at the Point of Care* were produced under AHRQ's Partnerships in Implementing Patient Safety (PIPS) grant program. The toolkit is designed to help health care institutions and clinicians provide patients with safe, quality health care at various points in the health care process. The toolkit includes a variety of evidence-based materials, including training resources, medication guides, and checklists.

### Useful Web Sites

The following list provides some Web sites that offer helpful information on falls prevention:

- [Fall Prevention Center of Excellence](#)
- [National Resource Center on Supportive Housing](#)
- [Minnesota Falls Prevention Initiative](#)
- [National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](#)
- [British Columbia Injury Research and Prevention Unit](#)
- [Prevention of Falls Network, Europe](#)
- [International Effort, Help the Aged](#)

## PROGRAMS

### CMS E-Prescribing Proposal

Mike Leavitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, released a [proposal for adopting e-prescribing standards](#). According to the proposal, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), a coalition member, will attempt to reduce the approximately 530,000 adverse drug effects that occur each year due to problematic drug interactions by implementing new e-prescribing standards. Not only will the medication history stored in the electronic device help physicians and pharmacists avoid problematic interactions, but it also will allow medical practices to know which medications Medicare patients' plans cover. CMS predicts that e-prescribing will benefit the economy by \$100 million or more after it's put in place across-the-board.

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