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## Costs of Falls Among Older Adults

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In 2000, the total direct cost of all fall injuries for people 65 and older exceeded \$19 billion.<sup>1</sup> The financial toll for older adult falls is expected to increase as the population ages, and may reach \$54.9 billion by 2020 (adjusted to 2007 dollars).<sup>2</sup>

### How big is the problem?

- One in three adults 65 and older falls each year.<sup>3, 4</sup>
- Of those who fall, 20% to 30% suffer moderate to severe injuries that make it hard for them to get around or live independently and increase their chances of early death.<sup>5</sup>
- Older adults are hospitalized for fall-related injuries five times more often than they are for injuries from other causes.<sup>5</sup>

### How are costs calculated?

The costs of fall-related injuries are often shown in terms of direct costs.

- Direct costs are what patients and insurance companies pay for treating fall-related injuries. These costs include fees for hospital and nursing home care, doctors and other professional services, rehabilitation, community-based services, use of medical equipment, prescription drugs, changes made to the home, and insurance processing.<sup>2</sup>
- Direct costs do not account for the long-term effects of these injuries such as disability, dependence on others, lost time from work and household duties, and reduced quality of life.

### How costly are fall-related injuries among older adults?

- In 2000, the total direct cost of all fall injuries for people 65 and older exceeded \$19 billion: \$0.2 billion for fatal falls, and \$19 billion for nonfatal falls.<sup>1</sup>
- By 2020, the annual direct and indirect cost of fall injuries is expected to reach \$54.9 billion (in 2007 dollars).<sup>2</sup>
- In a study of people age 72 and older, the average health care cost of a fall injury totaled \$19,440, which included hospital, nursing home, emergency room, and home health care, but not doctors' services.<sup>6</sup>

### How do these costs break down?

#### Age and sex

- The costs of fall injuries increase rapidly with age.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2000, the costs of both fatal and nonfatal falls were higher for women than for men.<sup>7</sup>
- Medical costs in 2000 for women, who comprised 58% of older adults, were two to three times higher than for men.<sup>1</sup>

#### Type of injury and treatment setting

- In 2000, traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and injuries to the hips, legs, and feet were the most common and costly fatal fall injuries, and accounted for 78% of fatalities and 79% of costs.<sup>1</sup>
- Injuries to internal organs caused 28% of deaths and accounted for 29% of costs from fatal falls.<sup>1</sup>
- Hospitalizations accounted for nearly two thirds of the costs of nonfatal fall injuries, and emergency department treatment accounted for 20%.<sup>1</sup>
- On average, the hospitalization cost for a fall injury was \$17,500.<sup>7</sup>
- Fractures were both the most common and most costly type of nonfatal injuries. Just over one third of nonfatal injuries were fractures, but they accounted for 61% of costs—or \$12 billion.<sup>1</sup>
- Hip fractures are the most frequent type of fall-related fractures. The cost of hospitalization for hip fracture averaged about \$18,000 and accounted for 44% of direct medical costs for hip fractures.<sup>8</sup>

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