

The Falls Prevention Initiative

What is the Falls Prevention Initiative?

Health Canada and Veterans Affairs Canada have established a community-based health promotion initiative to help identify effective strategies to prevent falls in the community among veterans and seniors. In 2000, Veterans Affairs Canada committed \$10 million over a four-year period for this health promotion initiative and is to pilot approved projects nationally and in three regions: Atlantic Canada, Ontario and British Columbia. The pilot projects have a potential to reach about 70% of Canada's veteran population and 60% of Canadian seniors. Key results from the Initiative will be shared with all interested and involved parties in every region across Canada and it is hoped that communities will continue to build identified effective prevention strategies.

Why the emphasis on falls?

Falls are a serious health problem for Canadian seniors and veterans and have a grave impact on independence and quality of life. Approximately one in three seniors will suffer a fall this year. Falls generate some 57% of the direct health care costs (\$2.4 billion) and care for senior Canadians represents about 41% of these costs.

Research indicates that approximately 38% of Canada's veteran population, which is proportionally older and in poorer health than the general seniors' population, will suffer one or more falls this year.

The development of effective falls prevention strategies takes on added importance as Canada's population continues to age. There are now close to four million Canadians aged 65 or over. This number should grow by close to one million in the next ten years.

Most studies show that falling is often the result of a complex combination of factors, such as personal health practices and individual health status. These factors may operate alone or in conjunction with safety hazards, many of which are often found in or around the home. Studies also suggest that health promotion interventions can reduce or eliminate high-risk behaviours or risk factors which contribute to falls. While some knowledge and experience does exist on falls prevention in Canada, it is not enough. The Initiative will deepen existing knowledge by addressing the range of risk factors and by identifying what practices, program models and community settings are best able to effectively reach veterans and seniors living in the community.

There is also a need to create broader awareness of the issue. By involving new sectors, creating new partnerships and developing tools for organizations and communities which want to implement strategies for falls prevention, the Initiative will help to create safer home and community environments for older Canadians.

How does the Falls Prevention Initiative assist communities?

The Initiative provides funding to sustainable community-based projects whose primary objective is to promote the independence and quality of life of veterans and seniors by preventing the number and reducing the severity of falls. The target populations for the Initiative are community-dwelling veterans, seniors and their caregivers.

For more information

Projects in the Atlantic provinces

Atlantic Region
Population and Public Health Branch
Health Canada
Suite 1802, 1505 Barrington Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 3Y6
Tel: (902) 426-2700
Fax: (902) 426-9689
E-mail: [pphatlantic-spspatlantique@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:pphaltlantic-spspatlantique@hc-sc.gc.ca)

Projects in British Columbia

British Columbia/Yukon Region
Population and Public Health Branch
Health Canada
Suite 440F, 757 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6C 1A1
Tel: (604) 666-2729
Fax: (604) 666-8986

Projects in Ontario

Ontario/Nunavut Region
Population and Public Health Branch
Health Canada
55 St. Clair Avenue East, 3rd Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 1M2
Tel: (416) 973-0003
Fax: (416) 954-8211

Projects that are national in scope

Division of Aging and Seniors
Population and Public Health Branch
Health Canada
Address Locator 1908A1
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1B4
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