

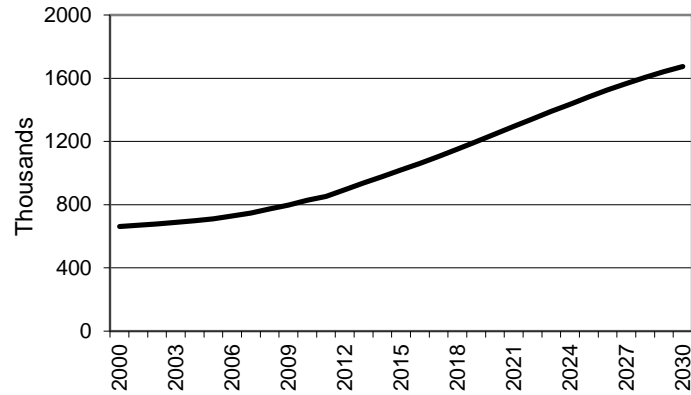
## Older Adult Falls

In Washington State from 2008 to 2012, there were 104,001 hospitalizations for falls. Of these, 68,828 (66 percent) were among people 65 years and older. Also during this time there were 3,920 fall-related deaths, with 3,373 (86 percent) of these were people 65 and older. Even though falls happen at all ages, the risks and adverse outcomes increase as people age. These include traumatic brain injury, broken limbs, nursing home placement, or other long-term care needs. Because of the aging population, it is likely older adult falls and falls prevention will continue to be an important public health and injury prevention issue (see graph below).

### Key Messages to Help Reduce Risks

- ◆ Fall-related injuries and deaths happen throughout the age span, and increase sharply with advancing age. Yet, **falls are not a normal part of aging.**
- ◆ Hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries are serious outcomes from falling.
- ◆ For older adults in the community, the risk of falling is 3-4 times higher for those with muscle weakness, or gait and balance problems. These people need to do regular strength and balance exercises.
- ◆ Risk factors for falls can be reduced:
  - Exercise to improve muscle strength, gait, and balance.
  - Have vision checked by an eye doctor at least once a year. Vision problems can improve with the correct glasses and good lighting in and around the home.
  - Know, understand, and monitor medications. Ask if you really need all the medications you are taking. Have your pharmacist review all prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and supplements to reduce harmful side effects and negative interactions.
  - Reduce hazards in and around where you live. Put electric cords out of the way, secure loose rugs, install handrails on stairways, improve lighting, and install grab bars in the shower and tub, and by the toilet.
- ◆ Keep a portable or cell phone with you when alone. If you fall and cannot get up, call 911 as soon as possible. Consider getting an emergency alert system to call when you need help.

Washington Population Forecast - 65+  
Office of Financial Management, 2000-2030



### Information and Resources

- Area Agencies on Aging in Washington State (find your local AAA) [www.agingwashington.org](http://www.agingwashington.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)
- National Council on Aging [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)
- WA State Injury & Violence Prevention Guide, January, 2013 [Falls \(PDF\)](#)

July 24, 2014