

Healthy Vision Month — May 2016

May is Healthy Vision Month, a national observance devoted to encouraging persons to make vision and eye health a priority. During this month, CDC's Vision Health Initiative in the Division of Diabetes Translation partners with the National Eye Institute's National Eye Health Education Program to educate the public about vision loss prevention and eye health promotion. May is also Older Americans Month, which offers an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of older adults' health and well-being to their independence.

In recognition of these two observances, CDC's Vision Health Initiative recently examined the state-specific annual prevalence of falls among persons aged ≥ 65 years with and without self-reported severe vision impairment. The study's findings, reported in this issue, indicate a higher prevalence of falls among older adults with severe vision impairment, as well as wide variation in that prevalence among states. These findings suggest that among the approximately 2.8 million persons aged ≥ 65 years reporting severe vision impairment in 2014 (1), an estimated 1.3 million likely experienced a fall in the previous year. The findings also underscore the importance of each state implementing effective strategies to improve vision health and reduce falls, especially among older adults with severe vision impairment.

Because many common eye diseases have no immediate symptoms, early detection and timely treatment are important, as is the use of proper eye-safety practices. Developing community-based interventions for populations at high risk might reduce identified disparities in vision health. More information about vision and eye health is available from CDC (<http://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth>) and the National Eye Institute (<https://nei.nih.gov/hvm>).

Reference

1. Census Bureau. Disability characteristics. Suitland, MD: US Department of Commerce, Census Bureau; 2016. http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_S1810&prodType=table

Falls Among Persons Aged ≥ 65 Years With and Without Severe Vision Impairment — United States, 2014

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In 2014, an estimated 2.8 million persons aged ≥ 65 years in the United States reported severe vision impairment* defined as being blind or having severe difficulty seeing, even with eyeglasses. Good vision is important for maintaining balance as well as for identifying low-contrast hazards, estimating distances, and discerning spatial relationships. Conversely, having poor vision increases the risk for falls (1,2). Falls among older adults are common and can cause serious injuries, disabilities, and premature death (1,3). To date, no state-level investigations have examined the annual prevalence of falls

* http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_12_1YR_S1810&prodType=table.

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