As you age, the risk of falling increases. Changes in vision and balance and a number of other medical and physical conditions can contribute to an increased risk of falling. Approximately 30% of older adults not in hospitals or care facilities fall each year.

Because most people also lose bone density as they grow older, the risk of suffering broken bones (fractures) from fall-induced injuries also is a major concern.

Researchers reporting in the May 26, 1999, issue of JAMA state that the number of older persons with fall-induced injury is increasing at a tremendous rate. Although the study, which looked at fall-induced injuries in people over the age of 50 from 1970 to 1995, was conducted in Finland, the researchers believe this is a major international public health problem, especially in developed countries with aging populations. They call for vigorous preventive measures to be adopted to control the increasing burden of these injuries.

Additional Sources: National Institute on Aging, American Geriatrics Society, Mayo Clinic, AMA’s Encyclopedia of Medicine

For more information:
- National Institute on Aging Preventing Falls and Fractures 800/222-2225 800/222-4225 (TTY) or www.nih.gov/nia

Inform yourself:
To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, check out the AMA’s Web site at www.ama-assn.org/consumer.htm.

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