

Injury and Violence Free Living

Reducing injury and violence improves physical and emotional health. The leading causes of death from unintentional injury include motor vehicle-related injuries, unintended poisoning (addressed in the “preventing drug abuse and excessive alcohol use” chapter), and falls.²³⁷ Witnessing or being a victim of violence (e.g., child maltreatment, youth violence, intimate partner and sexual violence, bullying, elder abuse) are linked to lifelong negative physical, emotional, and social consequences.²³⁸

KEY FACTS

- Each year, more than 29 million people suffer an injury severe enough to warrant medical attention, and 180,000 people die from their injuries.²³⁷
- Every day on average, 12 working men and women are killed on the job and more than three million people—including approximately 150,000 youth (ages 15 to 17)—suffer a work-related injury or illness.²³⁹ Men and Hispanic and foreign-born individuals have higher rates of work-related fatal injuries.²⁴⁰
- Motor vehicle crash-related injuries are the leading cause of death among younger people aged 5 to 34 years.²³⁷ Motor vehicle crash fatality rates are especially high in rural areas and for residents of tribal lands, in part because of poor road maintenance, higher rates of alcohol impaired driving, lower rates of seat belt and child safety seat use, and less access to emergency response and trauma care.²⁴¹
- A history of exposure to adverse experiences in childhood, including exposure to violence and maltreatment, is associated with health risk behaviors such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, and risky sexual behavior, as well as health problems such as obesity, diabetes, ischemic heart disease, sexually transmitted diseases, and attempted suicide.²⁴²
- Each year, about a third of adults aged 65 years and older experience a fall, and 20 to 30 percent of them suffer a moderate to severe injury (e.g., hip fracture, head trauma).²⁴³ Those injuries can make it more difficult for older adults to live independently and increase their risk of early death.²⁴⁴
- Homicide rates are almost eight times higher among African Americans than among white Americans. Homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans age 10 to 24 years.²⁴⁵

Recommendations: What can be done?

Injury and violence can be prevented by making homes, communities, schools, and work sites safer; strengthening and implementing community-based prevention policies and programs; and focusing efforts among groups at highest risk for injuries and violence, including youth and older adults.

1 Implement and strengthen policies and programs to enhance transportation safety.

Effective traffic safety policies and programs prevent motor vehicle-related injuries and death.²⁴⁶ Examples include primary seat belt laws, child safety and booster seat laws, graduated driver licensing systems for young drivers (e.g., that include restrictions on nighttime driving and carrying passengers), policies that reduce driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs (e.g., alcohol ignition interlocks, sobriety checkpoints) or while drowsy or distracted (e.g., prohibitions on texting), motorcycle and bicycle helmet laws, pedestrian safety education, enhanced enforcement of speeding, and other safety regulations.²⁴⁷

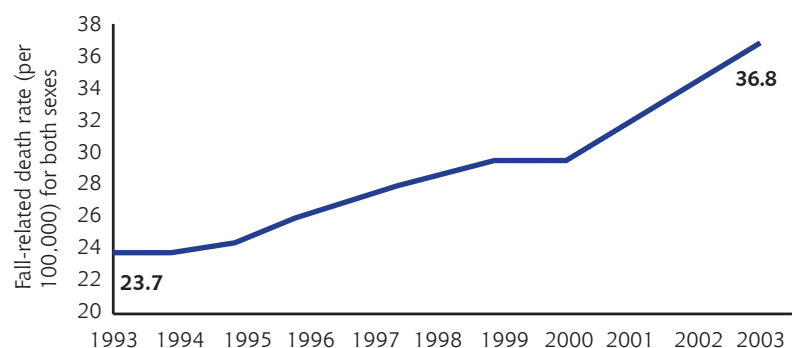
2 Support community and streetscape design that promotes safety and prevents injuries.

Communities and streets can be designed to reduce pedestrian, bicyclist, and vehicle occupant injuries.²⁴⁸ Road modifications (e.g., separating traffic from pedestrians and bicyclists, speed bumps, pedestrian refuge islands, roundabouts) can reduce the number of deaths and injuries. Many of these modifications, which are included in the Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School models, can also increase levels of physical activity.²⁴⁹

3 Promote and strengthen policies and programs to prevent falls, especially among older adults.

Exercise programs to increase strength and balance, medication review and modification to eliminate all but essential drug treatments, home modifications (e.g., grab bars, railings), and vision screening can prevent falls among older adults.²⁵⁰ Enhancing linkages between clinical- and community-based prevention efforts increases the availability and use of these programs.²⁵¹ Properly designed and maintained playgrounds, home safety devices (e.g., stair gates), and use of protective gear when playing active sports can help prevent children from sustaining injuries related to falls.²⁵²

The Fall-Related Death Rate is Increasing for Americans 65 and Over



Source: National Vital Statistics System, CDC, 1993–2003

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PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act: Georgia

The Georgia General Assembly passed the Teenage and Adult Driver Responsibility Act requiring graduated driver licensing and imposing additional restrictions on young drivers, including automatic license revocation for excessive speeding. As a result, the number of fatal crashes among drivers subject to the law has dropped by 38 percent. These drivers are also less likely to be convicted of speeding or driving under the influence of alcohol.

4 Promote and enhance policies and programs to increase safety and prevent injury in the workplace. Comprehensive workplace prevention programs that include management commitment, employee participation, hazard identification and remediation, worker training, and program evaluation can successfully reduce workplace injuries and illnesses.²⁵³ Effective prevention strategies for workplace deaths and injuries include developing and implementing engineering controls and protective technologies; comprehensive, written programs that are part of formal work site safety training initiatives; and training on work practices that promote a culture of safety within the workplace.²⁵⁴ Electronic tracking systems help identify hazards, inform prevention planning, and measure progress. In multiemployer work sites, enhanced safety communication is also critical.²⁵⁵

5 Strengthen policies and programs to prevent violence. Modifications to the physical environment (e.g., windows that overlook sidewalks and parking lots, landscape designs that facilitate lines of sight) can deter criminal behavior and enhance community safety.²⁵⁶ Decreasing the number of businesses selling alcohol has also been shown to reduce violent crime.²⁵⁷ In addition, housing and economic development and education initiatives (e.g., reducing concentrated poverty, increasing high school graduation rates) show promise in reducing rates of crime and violence.²⁵⁸

6 Provide individuals and families with the knowledge, skills, and tools to make safe choices that prevent violence and injuries. Education and skills-building programs can provide individuals and families with knowledge, skills, and tools to help them prevent violence and injuries.²⁵⁹ Strategies include

school-based programs to prevent violence (e.g., bullying, teen dating violence) and reduce unintentional injury risks (e.g., bike helmet use); intimate partner violence prevention efforts; social development strategies that teach children how to handle difficult social and peer situations without violence; parent and family skill-based programs that support positive family interactions and prevent infant and early childhood exposure to trauma and violence; and youth development programs.²⁶⁰ In addition, workplace interventions (e.g., worker training, security systems, safety procedures) can reduce violence, bullying, and other negative behaviors.²⁶¹

Actions

The Federal Government will

- Support state, tribal, local and territorial agencies in implementing, strengthening, and enforcing transportation safety policies and programs.
- Enhance enforcement of current safety regulations, provide training and technical assistance to improve worker safety, and empower workers to report health and safety concerns.
- Develop and test innovative and promising strategies to prevent injuries and violence.
- Educate adults and youth on actions they can take to prevent injury at home, work, and school and in their communities.

Partners Can

State, Tribal, Local, and Territorial Governments can

- Strengthen and enforce transportation safety policies and programs (e.g., primary seat belt laws, child safety and booster seat laws, graduated driver licensing systems for young drivers, motorcycle helmet use laws, ignition interlock policies).
- Implement traffic engineering strategies (e.g., sidewalks and pedestrian safety medians) that allow pedestrians, bicyclists,

Key Indicators	Current	10-Year Target
Rate of fatalities due to alcohol impaired driving	0.40 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled	0.38 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled
Rate of fall-related deaths among adults age 65 and older	45.3 deaths per 100,000 population	45.3 deaths per 100,000 population
Rate of homicides	6.1 homicides per 100,000 population	5.5 homicides per 100,000 population
Rate of motor vehicle crash-related deaths	13.8 deaths per 100,000 population	12.4 deaths per 100,000 population

motorists, and public transportation users to safely move along and across streets.

- Implement countermeasures for impaired driving (e.g., alcohol sobriety checkpoints) and enhance enforcement of speeding and other safety regulations.
- Implement per se drug impairment laws (presence of any illegal drug in one's system), train law enforcement personnel to identify drugged drivers, and develop standard screening methodologies to detect the presence of drugs.
- Develop systems to increase access to trauma care.
- Implement policies to support modifications to the physical environment to deter crime (e.g., crime prevention through environmental design).

Businesses and Employers can

- Implement and enforce safety policies for all drivers (e.g., seat belts or restraint use, zero tolerance for distracted driving).
- Implement comprehensive workplace injury prevention programs that include management commitment, employee participation, hazard identification and remediation, worker training, and evaluation.
- Expand and improve occupational injury and illness reporting systems.

Health Care Systems, Insurers, and Clinicians can

- Conduct falls-risk assessments for older adults, including medication review and modification and vision screening.
- Implement and test models for increasing falls-risk assessments (e.g., physician education, and linkages with community-based services).
- Include occupational and environmental risk assessment in patient medical history-taking.

Early Learning Centers, Schools, Colleges, and Universities can

- Encourage youth to use seat belts, bicycle helmets, and motorcycle helmets, and not drive while distracted or under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Collect and report statistics on crimes that occur and result in injuries on or around campuses and issue timely warnings to campus communities about crimes that may threaten safety and health.

- Implement policies, practices, and environmental design features to reduce school violence and crime (e.g., classroom management practices, cooperative learning techniques, student monitoring and supervision, limiting and monitoring access to buildings and grounds, performing timely maintenance).

Community, Non-Profit, and Faith-Based Organizations can

- Promote safer and more connected communities that prevent injury and violence (e.g., by designing safer environments, fostering economic growth).
- Build public awareness about preventing falls, promote fall prevention programs in home and community settings, and educate older adults on how to prevent falls.
- Implement programs that assist juveniles and adults who are re-entering their communities following incarceration that support their returning to school, securing employment, and leading healthy lifestyles.

Individuals and Families can

- Refrain from driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or while drowsy or distracted (e.g., texting).
- Use seat belts, bicycle helmets, motorcycle helmets, and protective sports gear.
- Establish clear expectations and consequences with teenagers about safe driving, including speeding, seat belt use, alcohol- or drug-impaired driving, and distracted driving.
- Engage in regular physical activity to increase strength and balance to help prevent falls.

KEY DOCUMENTS

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: Traffic Safety Fact Sheets
- Best Practices for a Safe Community
- Essential Elements of Effective Workplace Programs and Policies for Improving Worker Health and Well-Being
- Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General
- Preventing Falls: What Works

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: Urban Networks to Increase Thriving Youth (UNITY)

Promoting effective, sustainable efforts to prevent violence before it occurs, UNITY cities and communities emphasize collaboration across multiple sectors and disciplines, including justice, education, labor, social services, public health and safety, and youth-serving organizations. For example, in Louisville, Kentucky, a multidisciplinary coalition worked to implement policies that limit alcohol promotion, increase neighborhood lighting, and decrease graffiti and neighborhood blight. In Boston, a community coalition connects students to employment opportunities and to after-school and summer activities that build coping skills and prevent violence.