

# Skagit County **Fall Prevention Coalition**

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# Why focus on falls?



Falls are the leading cause of injury and injury death among older adults (>65 YO) in the US.

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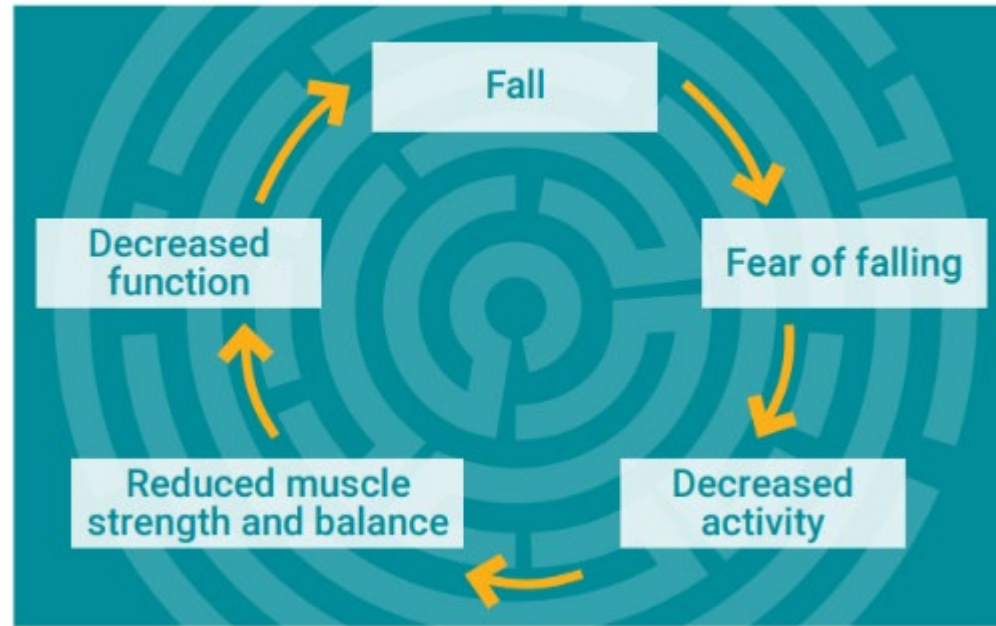


Figure 2: Adapted from Ang, Low, & How (2020)

Falls can be life-changing.

Even if a fall does not result in an injury, they can result in persistent fear which reduces quality of life for older adults and their loved ones.

# Falls are not a normal part of aging!



# How often do falls happen?

- Nationwide,
  - 1 in 4 older adults fall each year. More than half do not tell their doctor (or their kids?)
  - Every 11 seconds, an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury.
  - Every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.



# Skagit Context

- In 2023, **24%** of Skagitonians were aged 65 years old and over (compared to just 17.5% in Washington overall)
- In 2024, Skagit EMS agencies responded to **2489 falls**
  - About **7 falls per day!**
  - **56%** of these falls occurred at home
- In 2024, Skagit emergency departments had **2453** fall-related visits





# Fall Prevention



How can we empower Skagitonians in their healthy aging journeys?

# Skagit County Fall Prevention Coalition

- We strive to reduce the number of falls in Skagit County by:
  - Gathering peers and subject matter experts to brainstorm collaborative solutions
  - Planning & implementing data-based interventions
  - Increasing awareness of fall prevention resources





# Coalition Profile

- 30 participants, including:
  - Private citizens
  - EMS professionals
  - Physical therapists
  - Physical therapy assistant students (volunteers)
- 15 organizations, including:
  - Anacortes Fire Department
  - Samish Indian Nation
  - Skagit Family YMCA
  - Peace Health
  - Skagit Regional Health
  - Island Health
  - Anacortes Senior Activity Center
  - Northwest Regional Council
  - Eden Health
- Regional connections
  - Snohomish County Public Health
  - Island County Public Health
  - WA Department of Health
  - North Region EMS



# Why do falls happen & what can we do about it?

- Undernutrition
  - *Skagit strengths:* Meals on Wheels, Senior Centers
- Fear of falling
- Medication interactions
- Uncorrected vision & hearing concerns
  - *Skagit strengths:* Lions Club hearing aid & glasses program
  - Vision screening campaign?



# Why do falls happen & what can we do about it?

- Environment: lack of handrails, grab bars, proper lighting, etc.
  - Skagit Habitat Critical Repairs Program?
  - List of local contractors?





# Why do falls happen & what can we do about it?

- Muscle weakness, balance issues
  - Medical provider screening campaign?
  - Fitness options: YMCA, physical therapy
  - Home health equipment loan program?



# Next steps

- Capacity assessment with coalition members
  - What are the strengths and opportunities in our county?
- Data deep dive: partnership with the Department of Health
  - Skagit falls by zip code, age, insurance status, and more
- Stay tuned!



Thank you!

