

## Consequences of falls

Falls pose a serious threat for older people. The rate of falls increases steadily after the age of 60yrs. Although children fall more often, the consequences of falls are more serious in older people because of frailty, inability to get up, impaired judgement and underlying bone disease e.g. osteoporosis. A relatively minor fall may result in a serious injury like a hip fracture.

Falling is often a very frightening experience, and the outcomes can range from physical injury, disability, dependence, and even more serious consequences. It has been estimated that between **5 and 10% of all falls result in significant injury**. In Great Britain, 400,000 older people are submitted into hospital each year because of a **fall related injury**. Hip fractures are the most common and often most serious fracture and count for 1% of falls in people over 65 of age. Minor injuries such as bruises result from 30% to 50% of falls.

A serious injury e.g. a hip fracture, after a fall can lead to disability and decreased mobility. A frail and immobile person is more likely to become dependent on the help and support of other people or care facilities, such as a domestic carer or a nursing home.

Another consequence of falling is the 'long lie'. A person who is unable to get up after a fall, can suffer from pressure sores, pneumonia, dehydration and hypothermia.

Not all falls result in physical injuries. Falling can also have long-lasting **psychological and social consequences**. These consequences are often called 'post-falls syndrome', because they occur after the fall or after the person has recovered from any fall-related injuries.

The constant fear of falling again, for example, is for many older people a big problem. As a result they lose their confidence to go out and voluntarily restrict their daily activities such as shopping or meeting friends. The overall quality of life suffers and in many cases older people feel isolated, suffer from low self-esteem and may even become depressed.