

## **So Dangerous for Seniors?**

We know that cancer and heart failure are sometimes deadly diseases but mortality associated with both of these conditions is actually declining. Technological advances resulting in early detection and improved treatments have increased life expectancy and quality of life for those diagnosed affected by these disorders.

There is a simple health issue that can't be solved by technology alone: Falls.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), falls are the number one cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries to seniors. Each year more than 27,000 seniors succumb to problems that originate with a fall. Naturally, those with vision conditions like AMD are at higher risk.

How can falling down become a life-threatening injury? There are multiple ways that a fall can affect seniors. The damage can range from a broken hip to a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Research done by

the CDC concluded that trauma to the brain was the cause of death in 41% of seniors in 2010.

Most commonly, a fall can result in bruises (soft tissue injury) and fractured bones – wrists and leg bones are especially at risk. These fractures may require a surgical procedure – and sedation or anesthesia – which is an additional risk to seniors.

Even a minor injury resulting from a fall may lead to a hospitalization or a stopover in a skilled nursing facility. Your stay as an inpatient can lead to a loss of functionality and confidence in your ability to move independently.

Low vision can certainly increase the risk of injuries caused by falls. Here are some easy tips to avoid falls:

- Keep rooms free of clutter. Don't pile magazines or books on the floor that you can trip on. Remove unnecessary furniture that restricts your movement, and don't leave unsecured area rugs on the floor. Tripping hazards are the most common cause of falls in low vision individuals.
- Ensure well-marked working light switches are located near the entrance to any room, so that you do not fumble in the dark when you enter a room.

- Make sure your hallways and stairs are well-lit, and you have installed sturdy handrails on both sides of stairwells to grasp while going up and down.
- Keep your eyeglasses nearby. Make sure they are easy to access when you need to get up and can be grabbed before you have to make any sudden movements.

Low vision should not discourage you from activities that you enjoy, including walking. But be careful when you are moving around to avoid falls that may lead to something much more serious.