

# Atlas of Healthcare Variation

## Consumer summary | Falls in older people

### Falls in people aged 50 and over

The Atlas of Healthcare Variation is a website that uses maps, graphs, tables and words to show differences in health care in New Zealand by district health board (DHB). The Atlas is used to start people talking about health care differences, the reasons why differences may be happening and to support DHBs to make changes that keep their people safe.

The falls Atlas shows how many people aged over 50 had one or more fall-related injuries in each DHB. It includes injuries that were treated in the community (for example by a GP or physiotherapist) and injuries that needed hospital treatment. The Atlas also looks at how many people were admitted to hospital because they had broken their hip, and how long they stayed in hospital (known as 'bed days').

The Health Quality & Safety Commission is working with the sector and key stakeholders including ACC and the Ministry of Health to help prevent falls.

### What the atlas data on falls shows

The data shows that 216,000 people aged 50 and over had one or more claims for a fall-related injury accepted by ACC in 2016. This was an increase from 2011, when 46,000 fewer people had a claim for a fall-related injury.

The number of people from each DHB making ACC claims (taking into account their population size) varies, with some DHBs having one and a half times the number of claims that others had. There are many reasons why ACC claims may differ between DHBs, such as people not seeking medical assistance, choosing not to claim or the injury being minor.

Other findings include:

- on average there were 56 ACC falls-related claims a day from people aged 85 and over
- approximately 21,000 people were admitted to hospital for more than one day because of a fall-related injury in 2015
- people aged 85 and over had 8 times more admissions than those aged 65–74 and 16 times more admissions than those aged 50–64 years
- people aged 85 and over stayed on average 13.4 days as a result of a fall-related injury, compared with 5 days for those aged between 50-64 years
- people 85 and over accounted for half of hip fractures relating to a fall in people aged 50 and over
- 68percent of people with a hip fracture who were aged 50 or over were operated on the day they were admitted to hospital or the next day. This is important because a broken hip is very painful and surgery is one of the best forms of pain relief
- women were 1.45 times more likely to be admitted to hospital because of a fall than men.

It is recommended that osteoporosis is assessed and treated following a hip fracture. Two medications that should be considered are bisphosphonates and vitamin D. This should be in conjunction with falls prevention strategies such as exercise and home safety. The use of these two medications following a hip fracture was measured, this found:

- There was a significant reduction in the percent of people receiving a community-dispensed bisphosphonate in the six months following hip fracture, from 35 percent in

2011 to 21 percent in 2016. It is not known whether this is because more people received an injection in hospital (aclasta).

- The percent of people receiving vitamin D in the six months after hip fracture was 66 percent.

### **Tips for preventing falls**

This information is from ACC. See the [ACC website](#) for more tips and information on preventing falls.

If you have had a fall, slip or trip you should tell your doctor or nurse and ask for a falls assessment. Often falls can be prevented by making changes to medication dosage, altering glasses or participating in strength and balance exercises. Reducing trip hazards by removing clutter in your home will help too.

### ***Avoid unnecessary risks***

Start by making your home as safe as possible. For more information, see [Keeping safe at home](#).

When you are out and about, take notice of your surroundings and keep an eye out for any potential hazards such as uneven pavements or loose rugs as these may cause you to slip, trip or fall. Wear shoes that help you walk safely.

### ***Have a health assessment***

Tell your doctor about any falls you may have or if you are afraid that you might fall or feel unsteady on your feet. Ask them about:

- strength and balance exercises
- whether your vision needs checking
- the medications you take
- other health conditions that may increase your risk of falling eg, heart health.

Your doctor can advise if anything needs to be changed, and recommend an exercise programme.