

Falls: A Serious Problem

One of the saddest aspects of my work is to see so many people who are injured in falling.

It is a very large topic, which I think will require more than one article. If I try to cover too much in the space allowed it will be too superficial and not very informative.

This week to begin I would like to set the stage so you can realize how large a public health problem it is. HUGE. We will even focus even more this week and consider falls in our older population.

In a split second life changes forever.

Older persons dying from injury --- falls are the leading cause.

The number of falls and severity of injury resulting from falls increases as people age. Not exactly new information. What are the serious injuries we see most from falls?

Head injuries, spine fractures, pelvic fractures, hip fractures and wrist fractures.

One day you're fine and the next day your whole life is upside down, or worse. 25% of people with a hip fracture die within a year. 50% more never return to the level of function they knew before. Only 25% will completely recover. That's awful.

For the 50% who never return to their former activities or level of function they have been robbed of their independence. I have been told often by older patients that they aren't afraid of dying. They are afraid of losing their independence and needing to depend on others for all the activities of daily living. Dire consequences indeed, from a split second fall.

Falling at the end of one's life is a scary miserable experience resulting in an unknown future of depression and slow deterioration.

There are 350,000 hip fractures in the United States every year 90% caused by falling. That's 1000 per day.

Two hundred billion dollars is the cost per year to treat these injuries. Staggering isn't it?

Well, I think we have about maxed out the bad news about how serious and increasing a problem falls are in our country.

I want to close on a more positive note and not leave you depressed all week. Falls are not inevitable natural occurrences.

You can prevent falls.

How? That is for next week. We don't want a fall to be your last trip. We need you. Your family needs you. See you next week with more information.

All Orthopaedic Surgery problems, related to falls or otherwise can be evaluated by Dr. Haverbush at Lakeview Community Wellness Center in Lakeview or at the office in Alma at 315 Warwick Dr., Alma, Michigan.

Appointments for either location are made by calling 989-463-6092 any weekday from 8 am to 5 pm. Future Lakeview Community Wellness Center clinics are May 16, May 30, June 13, 2008.

There will be a free very informational talk about shoulders entitled "Shoulder Pain. It Probably isn't Arthritis" at Lakeview Community Wellness Center tomorrow May 16, 2008 at 11:30 am. Please join us. Be well.

Dr. Haverbush