

March 25, 2009

# Injury Prevention Bulletin

In the USA, cats and dogs are a factor in more than 86,000 serious falls each year, according to the first government study of pet-related tumbles. Such incidents are relatively rare, accounting for just about 1 percent of injuries from falls. The vast majority cause only minor injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**But they are a disproportionate hazard for senior citizens, said CDC officials. They advise older people to improve lighting, remove pet toys and use obedience training.**

Researchers looked at emergency department reports for 66 U.S. hospitals for 2001 through 2006. They checked patient charts for mentions of dogs and cats involved in nonfatal injuries.

From that, they concluded that about 3 out of every 10,000 people annually suffer fall-related injuries from cats or dogs that are serious enough to send someone to the hospital. The rate was nearly twice as high for people 75 and older. And women were two times more likely to be injured than men. Most were quickly treated and released, but nearly 10 percent involved broken bones, internal injuries or other conditions that required hospitalization.

Cats caused injuries by tripping people. Dogs caused most of the pet-caused injuries. Dogs tripped people, startled them or pulled them off balance during a walk. Or dogs ran away and their owners toppled chasing after them. Their dog toys also caused tumbles.

**"A lot of these statistics show the owner does not have complete control of dog," said Lisa Peterson, a spokeswoman for the American Kennel Club. Obedience training can help. Also, reducing the number of dog toys and storing toys each night could help. And people who might get knocked over could consider getting already-trained dogs or smaller dogs, she said.**

Source: CDC report: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr> and Mark Stobbe, AP Medical Writer (on-line)

**"Although falls triggered by pets are not a leading cause of fall injuries in the NWT, promoting awareness and encouraging prevention of pet-triggered falls is advised."**

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