



# Media Release

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## **New research – 5,000 Victorians injured by falls in the street**

Ground breaking new research has found trips and falls in the street send over 5,000 pedestrians to hospital each year – even more than collisions with cars.

The research, the first of its kind in Australia, was undertaken by the Monash University Accident Research Centre, commissioned by Victoria Walks and funded by VicHealth.

It found that while collisions with vehicles result in about 1,600 pedestrian casualties in Victoria each year, pedestrian falls account for an average of 1,680 hospital admissions and 3,545 emergency department presentations.

“No Australian research has taken a detailed look at injuries caused by falls in the street before,” said Dr Jennifer Oxley, Associate Professor of the Research Centre and lead author of the report. “We didn’t really understand the scale of the problem until now.”

“One of the more surprising things for us was that falls in the street affect all adult age groups,” said Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer of Victoria Walks. “However, older people are more fragile so more likely to be seriously injured and they take longer to recover,” Dr Rossiter said. “The hospitalisation rate for those aged 85 or more was 14 times that of those aged 35-64,” Dr Oxley noted.

The study found over 25 per cent of hospital admissions from falls were for injuries to the lower extremities (e.g. legs/feet and hip).

“The consequence of falling in the street can be devastating, particularly for elderly walkers” said Dr Rossiter. “Falling and breaking a hip can be life changing and lead to premature death. International research shows that up to 40 percent of hip fracture patients die within a year of their injury.”

The authors hope the report will force a rethink of road safety, with road managers and safety experts considering falls in the street as well as traffic collisions.

“We call on the Victorian and Federal Governments to start investing in making walking safer, supporting councils to improve footpath surfaces and road crossings,” said Dr Rossiter. “There are great economic costs associated with falls and ill health and they cannot simply expect local councils to foot the bill.”

**ENDS**

Further comment:

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- Dr Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer, Victoria Walks 0425 805 578 [brossiter@victoriawalks.org.au](mailto:brossiter@victoriawalks.org.au)
- NOTE TO EDITORS: Pedestrians who have been injured during falls while walking are available for interview via Victoria Walks

The report *Fall Related Injuries While Walking in Victoria* can be accessed at [www.victoriawalks.org.au/falls-research/](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/falls-research/)

The research will be presented to the [Smart Urban Futures conference](#) on 23 March.

## Additional facts from the report

Falls in the street environment caused 17,727 Emergency Department (ED) presentations and 8,436 admissions to Victorian hospitals in the five year study period of 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2014.

### Emergency Department (ED) presentations

The number of emergency department presentations was found to increase over the five year period from 3,382 in 2009/10 to 3,665 in 2013/14, with an average of 3,545 per year. Females accounted for 55.5 percent of ED presentations, compared to 44.5 percent for men.

The most commonly injured body sites were the ankle and foot (23%), the head (21%) and the wrist and hand (19%). The most frequent injury types were dislocations/sprains/strains (31%) and fractures (27%) followed by open wounds (14%) and superficial injuries (14%).

Contributing factors were not recorded for most ED presentations. However, for those that did record contributing factors, the most commonly reported were kerbs or gutters (159 incidents), alcohol or drugs (111), and to a lesser extent uneven surfaces (69), dogs (64), potholes (49), tram or train tracks (39), wet surfaces (33) and wearing high heels (24).

### Hospital admissions

The number of hospital admissions was found to increase over the five year period from 1,681 in 2009/10 to 1,788 in 2013/14, with an average of 1,680 admissions per year.

The head/face and neck accounted for 37 percent of injuries, while injuries to the upper extremity (arms, hands etc.) were the next most common (29 percent). Fractures were the most common injury type, accounting for 52 percent of cases.

Fifty-four percent of cases required a stay in hospital of less than two days and 32 percent required a stay of between two and seven days. Comparison of hospital length of stay by age group found that twenty percent of those aged 75 or older were hospitalised for more than a week, compared to approximately nine percent for those aged 35-64 and less than one percent of under 35s.

Hospital admission data does not allow contributing factors to be identified.

### Age breakdown

Age group	Victorian ED presentations per 100,000 residents p/a	Victorian hospital admissions per 100,000 residents p/a
0-14	37.3	2.6
15-34	71.3	9.3
35-64	60.9	21.0
65-74	91.7	74.0
75-84	129.0	188.4
85+	127.2	289.3

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