

## Press Information

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### **SURVEY REVEALS CANADIAN SENIORS AT RISK OF BECOMING HELPLESS IN THEIR OWN HOMES**

**Toronto, Canada** – Canadians in their 70s and 80s today are capable, self-sufficient and want to continue living in their own homes. However, the vast majority have a mistaken understanding about how to access help in the case of a medical emergency and four in ten are unaware falls are the most common cause of injuries among seniors in Canada, reveals the Lifeline Report on Aging in Canada released today by Philips Lifeline.

The Lifeline Report on Aging in Canada is a survey of 1,000 Canadians aged 73 or older commissioned by Philips Lifeline, Canada's leading medical alert and response service. According to the survey, 95 per cent of those surveyed say continuing to live independently at home is either their top priority or very important to them. However, a staggering number are at risk of becoming helpless in their homes following a fall.

“All seniors living alone should have a failsafe plan about how they would get help if they fell as falls are a reality of aging. Each year more than 1.4 million Canadian seniors fall and 50 per cent are unable get up without help,” says Roxanne Rodgers, Clinical Nurse in Cardiology at Lakeshore General Hospital in Pointe-Claire. “Calling for help on a telephone is simply not possible if one cannot move, becomes disoriented or is knocked unconscious. It is unrealistic and dangerous, to assume a telephone will always be in reach or that someone will always hear your cry for help.”

According to the survey:

- 86 per cent of respondents are counting on always being able to reach and use a telephone following a fall.
- A further 10 per cent say they would try to get help on their own by trying to get up or yelling for help.
- 26 per cent said they didn't know how long it would take for help to arrive if they needed it.

Seniors' lack of preparedness for falls is in stark contrast to other survey findings which show respondents are willing and ready to make whatever changes are required if the changes help them to continue living in their own homes.

- Although 62 per cent of respondents don't currently have any assistance at home, they said it is only because they have not reached the age when they feel they need the help (64 per cent), rather than a reluctance to engage it.
- Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) of respondents said they would make some changes and engage seniors' services if it helped them to stay in their own home longer.
- Forty five per cent said they would even be willing to move into a smaller home if it enabled them to continue living independently.
- Only three per cent said they would never use senior services.

“Our survey reveals that today’s Canadian seniors are practical, independent and open to change but also dangerously unaware that falls are one of the most serious health risks among their age group,” says Erik Sande, General Manager, Philips Home Monitoring (Canada). “We recommend they subscribe to a medical alert device, such as Lifeline. This simple, unobtrusive device enables seniors to live active, independent lives yet provides instant access to help in case of a fall and peace of mind to the subscribers and their families.”

Falls are one of the most serious health risks among seniors, with an estimated one in three Canadians over age 65 expected to fall each year.<sup>1</sup> Fifty per cent of seniors who fall can’t get up without help<sup>2</sup>. The longer a senior lies helpless following a fall can have a dramatic impact on outcome. If a senior lies helpless for one hour or less the change of mortality is 12 per cent. However, seniors who lie helpless for 72 hours or more have a 67 per cent chance of mortality.<sup>3</sup>

The Lifeline Report on Aging was an online survey conducted from September 6<sup>th</sup> to September 8<sup>th</sup> among a sample of the 1004 Canadians aged 73 or older who are Angus Reid Forum panel members. The margin of error on the full base which measures sampling variability is +/- 3.1%. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Philips Lifeline is Canada’s leading medical alarm and response service. Its commitment to providing quality and caring service has made it the industry leader for more than thirty five years. Lifeline is also the only medical alarm and response service integrated with the Canadian healthcare system. With hundreds of partnerships with hospitals, healthcare agencies and senior living residences across the country, the Lifeline service is readily accessible across the country. For more information on Lifeline medical alarm and response service please visit [www.Lifeline.ca](http://www.Lifeline.ca).

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<sup>1</sup> Hornbrook, Gerontologist, 1994, Hausdorff, Arch Phys Med & Rehab, 2001

<sup>2</sup> As reported in Tinetti, M E, MD et al, Fall-risk evaluation and management: Challenges in adopting geriatric care practices, The Gerontologist, Vol. 46, No. 6, 2006, p. 718

<sup>3</sup> Philips Lifeline sponsored research with 500 healthcare professionals conducted by Portland Research Group, 2008.

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