Don't Fall Behind on Falls

Older Adults Can Help Manage Their Fall Risk and Stay Independent Longer

Every second of every day an adult aged 65 or older falls in the United States. Every 12 seconds, one of these older Americans is admitted to the emergency department for a fall; and every day, 74 of those will die from a fall.

This year, on the first day of fall, Thursday, September 22, 2016, CDC along with the National Council on Aging (https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/falls-prevention-awareness-day/) (NCOA) Falls Free Initiative (https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/falls-free-initiative/) invites you to join us in observing Falls Prevention Awareness Day (#FPAD2016). This event raises awareness about how to prevent fall-related injuries among older Americans.

Many of us have older family members who have fallen, or maybe we know someone in our community who has fallen and has perhaps broken a hip or suffered a traumatic brain injury due to a fall. Falls are common among adults 65 and older. In fact, one out of every four older Americans reported falling in 2014. We also know that more than half of those who fall do not tell their doctors or healthcare providers about it. These numbers have contributed to making older adult falls the leading cause of injuries, both fatal and nonfatal, among Americans 65 and older. Aside from causing injuries that can affect a person's overall health and quality of life, falls are also the most costly of injuries incurred by this age group.
Help protect the ones you love. Take steps to prevent falls.

In 2015, the Medicare costs of falls requiring medical treatment were more than $31 billion, and the average cost of a nonfatal fall was nearly $10,000. Falls aren't just a normal part of aging. Older Americans and their caregivers can take steps to prevent them.

- **Speak up.** Older adults can talk to their doctor or healthcare provider about their risk of falling and what they can do to help prevent falls. They should tell their healthcare providers right away:
  - if they have fallen,
  - if they are afraid of falling, or even
  - if they feel unsteady when walking or standing.

- **Keep moving.**
  - Activities that strengthen legs and help with balance, such as Tai Chi, can help prevent falls. These exercises should get more challenging over time to continue increasing strength and balance.
  - Check with healthcare providers about recommending an exercise program appropriate for the person.

- **Get annual physical exams.**
  - Have an annual physical checkup. Some health issues may increase the risk of falling.
  - Have a vision screening once a year and update eyeglasses as needed.

- **Check medications.**
  - Consider having a medication review conducted by a pharmacist or other healthcare provider.
  - Bring all medications, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements—whether taken regularly or occasionally—to a planned office visit or to the pharmacist for review.
  - Discuss any side effects like feeling dizzy or sleepy.
• Healthcare providers can help older adults determine which medications might be stopped, reduced, or switched if side effects are putting them at risk for falls.
• Additionally, ask the healthcare provider if taking Vitamin D supplements might help improve nerve, muscle, and bone health.

• Check for home safety. Most falls happen at home.
  ◦ Keep floors clutter-free.
  ◦ Remove small throw rugs, or use double-sided tape to secure them to the floor.
  ◦ Add grab bars in the bathroom—next to and inside the tub and next to the toilet.
  ◦ Have handrails and lights installed on all staircases.
  ◦ Make sure the home has lots of light.

With more than 10,000 older Americans turning 65 each day, the number of fall-related injuries and deaths are expected to surge unless preventive measures are taken. Encourage older Americans you know to take steps toward living longer and healthier lives; don't let them fall behind on fall prevention.

More Information

• Older Adult Falls
• Older Adult Falls Programs
• Important Facts about Falls
• Costs of Falls Among Older Adults
• STEADI - Older Adult Fall Prevention

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