

Reduce Your Risk of Falling

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every 18 seconds in the U. S. a senior adult is treated in a hospital emergency room as the result of a fall. In addition, a senior adult dies every 35 minutes as a result of a fall-related injury. In Idaho, 469 individuals age 65 and older died from fall-related injuries during 2010 to 2012.

Injuries from falls take time and money for treatment. Falls may also significantly reduce a senior adult's independence and severely affect their quality of life.

How can we decrease these alarming statistics? Many different factors contribute to falls. A first step to reduce falls is to discuss potential risk factors with your medical provider. In this discussion you may include any physical limitations you have, how to make your home safer, medications you are taking, staying safe around pets and their toys, proper use of assistive devices for mobility, and if any of your health conditions limit physical activity.

With your physician's consent, regular physical activity or exercise helps to improve and prevent the decline of muscle strength, balance, and endurance--all risk factors for falling. A fun and free way to exercise is through local Fit and Fall Proof™ classes, offered by Southwest District Health. These classes offer low-to-moderate intensity exercises designed to reduce the risk of falls and improve mobility, balance, and strength. They are designed for individuals to exercise from a chair or a wheelchair if needed.

Fit and Fall Proof™ classes also offer seniors an opportunity to expand their social network. Often these classes become more than an exercise class. Participants become friends and plan social activities in addition to attending classes.

Some participants have shared they began by forcing themselves to attend the classes, but became so engaged, they never wanted to miss a class.

Along with participating in a local Fit and Fall Proof™ class, you can also eliminate risk factors in your home. Five easy steps you can take to make your home fall-proof include:

- Remove loose rugs and cords.
- Make sure stairwells are well-lit and have sturdy railings.
- Repair broken or uneven steps.
- Look for and pick up clutter on the floor like magazines, boxes, blankets, etc.
- Make sure frequently used items are on easy to reach shelves.

For a complete list of Fit and Fall Proof™ classes; information about the program; and tips to fall-proof your home, visit www.swdh.org or call 208-455-5321. For more information on National Fall Prevention Week, September 23-29, visit <http://stopfalls.org/news-events/fall-prevention-awareness-week/>.

Fall 2014 Fit and Fall Proof™ Classes

Southwest District Health is now forming Fit and Fall Proof™ classes for the upcoming season. Visit www.swdh.org or call 208-455-5321 for more information.

Weiser Vendome - (Tuesday and Thursday: 9:00 am to 10:00 am)

Melba Senior Center - (Tuesday and Thursday: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

Parma Senior Center - (Tuesday and Thursday: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

First United Presbyterian Church (Nampa) - (Monday & Thursdays: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

Middleton Adventure Plaza- (Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 11:00 am)

Caldwell Senior Center- (Monday and Thursday: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

New Plymouth Senior Center- (Monday and Wednesday: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

Homedale Senior Center- (Tuesday and Thursday: 10:30 am to 11:30 am)

Payette Senior Center - (Wednesday and Friday: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

Gem County Rec. District (Emmett) - (Tuesday and Thursday: 10:00 am to 11:00 am)

LDS Church- Sunnyridge (Nampa) Tuesday and Thursday: 10:15 am to 11:15 am)

Trinity Lutheran (Nampa) (Monday and Thursday: 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm)

MAKE YOUR HOME FALL-PROOF

Along with participating in a local Fit and Fall Proof™ class there are a number of other steps that can be taken to reduce falls experienced by seniors and improve quality of life. One easy first step is to ensure that a home is fall-proof. Below is a checklist to help older adults avoid fall related injuries:

FLOORS

- * Remove rugs or use double-sided tape or non-slip backing so rugs won't slip
- * Keep objects off floor and stairs
- * Coil or tape electrical cords next to wall to prevent tripping

STAIRS & STEPS

- * Fix loose or uneven steps
- * Turn on light at the top and bottom of stairs; install a light if one isn't present; use switches that glow in the dark
- * Change light bulbs, ask family or friends for help
- * Fix loose handrails; handrails should be as long as stairs
- * Attach carpet firmly to every step; use rubber treads on uncarpeted stairs

KITCHEN

- * Move items in cabinets to bottom shelves, at waist height
- * Use a sturdy step stool with a bar; never use a chair as a stool

BEDROOM/BATHROOM

- * Place lamp close to the bed within easy reach
- * Use night lights
- * Put non-slip mats in tub or shower
- * Install grab bars in tub and next to toilet

OTHER PREVENTION MEASURES

- * Exercise regularly; it adds strength and improves balance and coordination
- * Ask your doctor or pharmacist about medicines that make you sleepy or dizzy
- * Get up slowly after sitting or lying down
- * Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles
- * Improve the lighting in your home
- * Use reflective tape at top and bottom of stairs
- * Keep emergency numbers in large print near phones
- * Consider using a personal emergency medical alert system.