

September is Falls Prevention Awareness Month and September 20-24, 2021 is Falls Prevention Week.

September 22 not only marks the start of the fall season; it is also National Falls Prevention Awareness Day. This brings attention to the epidemic of falls among older adults, with a simple message, most falls can be prevented. Falls have become epidemic in America and are now the leading cause of death due to injury for those over 65, and account for 40% of all nursing home admissions. Falls are also the leading cause of injury related emergency department visits for older adults, the major cause of hip fractures, and responsible for more than half of fatal head injuries. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, falls have also resulted in more than 3 million injuries treated in emergency departments annually, including over 850,000 hospitalizations and more than 29,000 deaths.

Some mistakenly believe that falls are a normal part of the aging process. It is true that our risk for falls increases as we age due mainly to body changes. There are many things we can do to keep those changes in check or compensate for them. Simply walking at least 15 minutes a day can build muscle strength and improve balance. Programs like tai chi, Stepping On and "A Matter of Balance" can give you tools to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Talk to your health care provider and ask for a falls risk assessment. Discuss your medications and history of falls. Get your vision and hearing checked annually. Drink plenty of fluids and eat a well-balanced diet. Make modifications in your home such as installing grab bars and removing throw rugs that can be tripped on. With some guidance and forethought, falls can be prevented. Be safe!

For more information please visit the following websites:

<https://agesafeamerica.com/fall-prevention/>

<https://www.ncoa.org/professionals/health/center-for-healthy-aging/national-falls-prevention-resource-center/falls-prevention-awareness-week>

<https://www.weldgov.com/Government/Departments/Human-Services/Area-Agency-on-Aging-AAA>