

For Immediate Release

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Contact:

**[YOUR ORGANIZATION] joins state and local partners to help older Ohioans be
“Strong Today, Falls Free® Tomorrow”**

Sept. 23, 2014, is Ohio Falls Prevention Awareness Day

[YOUR CITY] – September is Falls Prevention Awareness Month, and Tuesday, Sept. 23 is National Falls Prevention Awareness Day. The theme for 2014 is “Strong Today, Falls Free® Tomorrow,” and [YOUR ORGANIZATION] is joining state and local partners in encouraging Ohioans to take important steps today to maintain their independence and reduce their risk for falls.

“According to the Ohio Department of Health, falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalization and death among Ohioans age 65 and older,” said **[YOUR ORGANIZATION’S LEADER]**. “However, falls are not a normal part of aging, and most falls can be prevented.”

Here are a few things older adults can do to reduce their risk for falls and maintain their independence:

1. **Increase physical activity.** Simple exercise, like walking or swimming at least 15 minutes a day can help build muscle strength and improve balance, which can prevent falls. Throughout Ohio, programs like A Matter of Balance, Tai Chi, and Stepping On help older adults gain strength, improve balance, and build confidence to help them live healthier lives and preserve their independence.
2. **Visit an eye doctor annually.** Age-related eye diseases, such as cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy, can increase the risk of falling. Early detection is key to addressing these conditions. Wearing contact lenses or glasses with the correct prescription also is important to prevent falls.
3. **Review medications.** Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the medicines you are taking and whether they may cause drowsiness or dizziness. Discuss things you can do to ensure you are taking your medicines safely.
4. **Remove hazards around the home.** About half of all falls occur at home. Look for loose rugs, slippery floors, clutter and unsteady furniture, and remove or modify these hazards. Add grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower and next to the toilet, add railings on both sides of stairways and improve lighting in the home.

You’ll find more things you can do to prevent falls for yourself or your loved one from STEADY U Ohio, the state’s newest falls prevention initiative. STEADY U Ohio works to ensure that every county, every community and every Ohioan knows how they can prevent falls, one step at a time. Visit www.steadyu.ohio.gov for tips and resources, including an easy, online falls risk assessment.

The Ohio Older Adults Falls Prevention Coalition, an action group of the Ohio Injury Prevention Partnership, works to increase awareness of falls and promote evidence-based policies and interventions at the state and local level. **[YOUR ORGANIZATION]** is proud to be part of this coalition.

To learn about available trainings and resources to help you reduce your risks of falling, contact [YOUR ORGANIZATION], your area agency on aging (1-866-243-5678) or your local health department (www.odh.ohio.gov).

Facts about falls and older Ohioans

From the Ohio Department of Health

- Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalization and death among Ohioans aged 65 and older and are largely preventable.
- An older adult falls in Ohio every 2.5 minutes on average, resulting in three deaths each day, two hospitalizations each hour, and an emergency department visit every eight minutes.
- Older adults account for a disproportionate share of fall-related injuries. Approximately 14 percent of Ohio citizens are age 65 or older, yet this group accounts for more than 84 percent of fatal falls.
- The number of fatal falls among these older Ohioans increased more than 165 percent from 2000 to 2012.
- The total estimated cost of fatal falls (medical costs, work loss and decreased quality of life) is \$646 million annually in Ohio, while non-fatal, hospital-admitted falls among older adults cost more than \$4.2 billion annually.
- Falling, and the fear of falling, can lead to debilitating consequences such as depression and hopelessness, loss of mobility and loss of functional independence.
- The causes of falls vary with contributing factors including lack of strength in the lower extremities, the use of four or more medications, reduced vision, chronic health problems and unsafe home conditions.
- The risk of hip fracture can be reduced by getting screened, and if needed, treated for osteoporosis and by getting adequate calcium and vitamin D from food and supplements.

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