



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

*Timothy I. Ingram
Health Commissioner*

*250 William Howard Taft Road, 2nd Floor
Cincinnati, OH 45219*

*Phone 513.946.7800
Fax 513.946.7890*

hamiltoncountyhealth.org

NEWS

Contact: Mike Samet, Public Information Officer
Phone: 513-946-7873
E-mail: mike.samet@hamilton-co.org

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Don't Fall for Older Americans Month *May is a Good Time to Focus on Fall Prevention*

Hamilton County, OH.....May is Older Americans Month and this year's theme is "Never Too Old to Play." The focus on play is an opportunity to re-visit one of the most frequent causes of injury and even death to seniors – falling.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in three adults age 65 and older falls each year. Among this group, falls are the leading cause of injury death. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.

Falls are also a significant driver of healthcare costs, according to the CDC. Direct medical costs of falls totaled more than \$19 billion in the most recent year studied. As our population ages, these numbers are likely to increase.

"Like many of the diseases and injury conditions we deal with, falls are largely preventable," says Tim Ingram, Hamilton County Health Commissioner. "With preparation, information and education, we can reduce the incidences of falls and ultimately, help seniors to maintain active and fulfilling lifestyles."

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Following are five easy things you can do to prevent falls:

1. **Increase your 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. Exercise programs like Tai Chi that increase strength and improve balance are especially good.
2. **See your eye doctor once each year.** Age-related eye diseases, such as cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy, can increase the risk of falling. Early detection is key to minimizing the effects of these conditions.
3. **Review your 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 environmental hazards.** Look around the house for anything that could increase the risk of falls, including poor lighting, loose rugs, slippery floors and unsteady furniture. Remove or modify these hazards.
5. **Think, plan and slow down.** Many falls are caused by hurrying. Slow down and think through the task you are performing. Be mindful of risks and act accordingly.

Seniors can also lower their risk of hip fracture by:

- Getting adequate calcium and vitamin D from food and/or supplements;
- Performing weight bearing exercises;
- And getting screened and treated for osteoporosis.

For additional information, visit www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org or the Fall Prevention Task Force site, www.fallpreventiontaskforce.org.

Hamilton County Public Health works to assure the 465,000 citizens living outside the cities of Cincinnati, Norwood, Sharonville and Springdale are safe from disease, injury and contamination. # # #