



PREVENT. PROMOTE. PROTECT.

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### **Don't Fall for Older Americans Month**

*May is a Good Time for Mom and Dad to Focus on Fall Prevention*

Hamilton County, OH.....May is Older Americans Month and this year's theme is "Unleash the Power of Age." The focus on power is an opportunity to re-visit one of the most frequent causes of injury and even death to older adults – 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. According to the Ohio Hospital Association, in 2012 an older adult was six times more likely to be admitted to the hospital from a fall than a motor vehicle accident.

Falls are also a significant driver of healthcare costs, according to the CDC. Direct medical costs of falls totaled more than \$30 billion in 2010. As our population ages, these numbers are likely to increase. Fall injuries also lead to an increased burden on loved ones as injuries lead to loss of independence.

"Like many of the diseases and injury conditions we deal with, falls are largely preventable," says Michael Tomes, Hamilton County Public Health Educator. "With

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preparation, information and education, we can reduce the incidences of falls and ultimately, help older adults maintain active and fulfilling lifestyles.”

The following are five things you can encourage mom or dad to do to prevent falls:

1. **Increase physical activity.** Any physical activity, like walking or swimming at least 30 minutes a day can help build muscle strength and improve balance, which can prevent falls. Exercise programs like Tai Chi, Silver Sneakers and Water Aerobics that increase strength and improve balance are especially good.
2. **See an 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. **Help review your parent’s medications.** Talk to a doctor or pharmacist about the medicines your parents are taking and whether they may cause drowsiness or dizziness. Discuss ways you can ensure medications are taken safely.
4. **Make home modifications.** Look around the house for anything that could increase the risk of falls, including poor lighting, loose rugs, clutter, slippery floors and unsteady furniture. Remove or modify these hazards. Add a bathtub grab bar and make sure that stair handrails are secure. Temporary ramps can also be installed in the home entrance if steps are too difficult.
5. **Think, plan and slow down.** Many falls are caused by hurrying. Talk to your parents about taking their time and thinking through the task being performed. Be mindful of risks and act accordingly. A simple modification can be moving the cordless phone next to a favorite chair so it can be accessed without getting up.

Older Adults can also lower their risk of hip fracture by:

- Getting adequate calcium and vitamin D from food and/or supplements;
- Performing weight bearing exercises;

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- And getting screened and treated for osteoporosis.

For additional information, visit [www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org](http://www.hamiltoncountyhealth.org) or the Fall Prevention Task Force site, [www.fallpreventiontaskforce.org](http://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.*

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