



# Fall Prevention

## Statistics:

- **According to the CDC:**
  - About **1 in every 3** adults over the age of 65 fall each year, which accounts for about **12 million seniors** <sup>1</sup>
  - Falls are the leading cause of death from injury in people 65 and older. A total of 15,802 persons over the age of 65 died in 2005 from fall related injuries. <sup>1</sup>
  - Fall related injuries may include fractures, head injuries, and post-fall anxiety. This contributes to fear of falling and disability which decreases a persons independence. <sup>2</sup>
  - 60% of older adults fall in their own home

## Risk Factors for Falls

- Muscle weakness
- Balance and walking problems
- Taking 4 or more medications
- Side effects of certain medications
- Vision problems
- Certain chronic diseases such as Parkinson's Disease or stroke
- History of previous falls <sup>3</sup>

## What can you do to prevent a fall?

1. **Begin a regular exercise program** that works on strength, balance and coordination. Ask your doctor, physical therapist or health care provider about the best type of exercise program for you.

If you have weakness, balance, or walking problems you may benefit from consulting with a physical therapist to address these risk factors for falling. A physical therapist can help you create a program to address your specific needs.

Tai Chi is one form of exercise that has been proven to help reduce falls in persons over the age of 70. It works on balance, strength, coordination, and fear of falling.<sup>4</sup>

Normal Township offers Tai Chi 1 and 2 with a new session beginning July 12<sup>th</sup>. The classes are located at Normal Senior Center, One Normal Plaza, 1110 Douglas St. Normal, IL. For more information call 309-888-9099.

- 2. Review your medications with her health care provider**
- 3. Have your vision checked**
- 4. Make your home safer**

### *Making Your Home Safe*

- General
  - o Remove things that could trip you in the areas that you walk through such as: throw rugs, stacks of paper, extension cords and clothes
  - o Wear low-heeled shoes with nonskid soles. Do not walk around barefoot or in socks.
  - o Use nightlights for hallways
  - o Increase the brightness of lights at home and hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare from outdoor light
  - o Consider a cordless phone that can be carried from room to room
- Stairs
  - o Make sure you have handrails to use for all stairs and consider installing 1 on each side of the stairs
  - o Keep well-lit
- Bathroom
  - o Place grab bars near your toilet and tub to make transfers easier
  - o Use a bath chair or stool in shower
  - o Put non-slip bath mat in tub or shower
  - o Use night-lights
- Kitchen
  - o Use long-handled sponge/mop to wipe up spills
  - o Keep items that you use regularly in easily accessible locations so you do not have to use a step stool to get them<sup>5</sup>

1 Stevens JA, Mack KA, Paulozzi LJ, Ballesteros MF. Self-Reported Falls and Fall-Related Injuries Among Persons Aged >65 Years---United States, 2006. *MMWR CDC*. 2008; 57(09); 225-229.

2 Chang JT, Morton SG, Rubenstein LZ, et al. Interventions for the prevention of falls in older adults: systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials. *BMJ*. 20 March 2004; 328: 1-7.

3 Fleming D. Falls Among Older Americans: CDC Prevention Efforts before the Senate Subcommittee on Aging Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. (2002 June 11). Available at <http://www.hhs.gov/asl/testify/t20611.html>. Accessed April 21, 2010.

4 Wolf SL et al. Reducing frailty and falls in older persons: an investigation of Tai Chi and computerized balance training. *J Am Geriatr Soc* 1996; 44:489-497.

5 CDC Staff. The Injury Prevention & Control: Home and Recreational Safety Page. <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreational/Safety/Falls/index.fs.html>. Updated January 19, 2009. Accessed April 21, 2010.