FALLS PREVENTION
Sept. 2019

Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury. They can occur at anytime and anywhere and usually occur when people are engaged in their everyday activities. Approximately 25% of older folks fall each year.

Many falls do not cause injuries but one out of five falls does cause a serious injury. These injuries can make it hard for a person to get around and to maintain their independence in everyday activities.

Falls can cause broken bones, such as leg and hip fractures. Falls can also cause head injuries. Head injuries (sometimes called brain injuries) can be very serious. An older person who falls and hits their head should see their doctor right away to make sure they don’t have a brain injury.

Many people who fall, even if they’re not injured, become afraid of falling. This fear may cause a person to cut down on their everyday activities. When a person is less active, they become weaker and this increases their chances of falling.

Most falls can be prevented.

Prevention Tips:

- Older individuals should have a regular screening by their health care provider to monitor their gait and assess for balance issues. In addition, their medications should be reviewed to determine if they could cause weakness, dizziness etc.
- Everyone should have a regular assessment of their eyesight by an eye specialist and update their eyeglasses/contacts, as needed.
- Lighting: use lots of light and brighter bulbs, especially in hallways and on stairs can prevent accidents.
- Footwear: wear well fitting, low heeled shoes are safest.
- Exercise is important: do activities to maintain and/or improve strength, flexibility, endurance and balance, i.e. tai chi, yoga, walking etc.
- Home Safety: avoid clutter and things that you can trip on, remove scatter rugs and other tripping hazards, install safety devices such as handrails, shower mats and grab bars

Useful Websites:

Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.org
AARP: www.aarp.org
American Geriatrics Society: www.americangeriatrics.org