

# Know Yourself. Know Your Environment. No Falls.

**Falls and fall-related injury** seriously affect older adults' quality of life and present a substantial burden to the Ohio's families and health-care system. Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths and the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. Most bone fractures experienced among older adults are caused by falls. The most common fractures are of the spine, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, pelvis, upper arm and hand.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) reports that falls among older Ohioans have reached epidemic proportions, and account for a disproportionate share of fall-related injuries. In 2005, older Ohioans accounted for 20 percent of all fall-related emergency room visits and 81 percent of deaths, despite representing only 13 percent of the overall population. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 30 percent of Americans age 65 or older living in the community, and more than 50 percent of those living in residential care facilities or nursing homes, fall every year. The risk of falling increases with age.



## Prevent Falls

**You can reduce your risk of falls by following five easy steps:**

- 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. If you are unable to participate in these activities, ask your doctor for other types of activities that could help build your strength and balance.
- 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.

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## You can reduce your risk of falls ...

- 3. Review your medications.** Talk to your doctor 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. Identify areas where additional lighting, grab bars and other safety support are needed.
- 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 possible falls risks and act accordingly.

Individuals and families also can contact their area agency on aging or local health department office to learn about available trainings and resources designed to reduce the risk of falls. Call toll-free **1-866-243-5678** to be connected to the area agency on aging serving your community.

