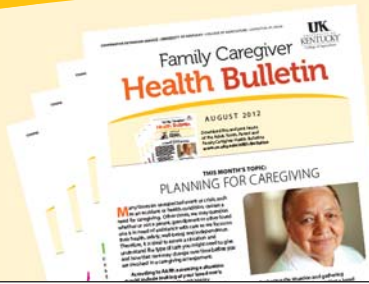


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



SEPTEMBER 2013

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Reprinted by:
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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: PREVENTING FALLS

Kentucky is one of 47 states, along with the national Falls Free Initiative, declaring a statewide Falls Prevention Awareness Day on the first day of fall, September 22, 2013.

This year's theme, *Preventing Falls—One Step at a Time*, seeks to unite professionals, older adults, caregivers and family members to play a part in raising awareness and preventing falls in the older adult population.

After the age of 65, common age-related physical changes and medical conditions, including the medications taken to treat illness and disease, increase a person's risk of falling. While not all falls are serious, falls remain the leading cause of injury and injury-related death among older adults in the United States. As a caregiver, it is important to understand that some people let falls



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On average, accidental falls among older adults result in more than 60 emergency room visits per day in Kentucky.

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or the fear of falling rule their life. They stop being physically and socially active, they isolate themselves or they become more dependent and less confident.

On a typical day in the Commonwealth, accidental falls among older adults result in 67 emergency room visits, 21 hospitalizations and 10 hip fractures. While falls create a wide array of economic and life quality costs, they are highly preventable. Falls Prevention Awareness Day raises awareness of the many preventive measures that can be taken to keep seniors safe. Knowing the risks and being familiar with fall prevention measures can prevent falls. Studies show that a combination of interventions can significantly reduce falls among older adults. Experts recommend:

- A physical activity regimen with balance, strength training and flexibility components
- Consulting with a health professional about getting a fall risk assessment
- Having medications reviewed periodically
- Getting eyes checked annually
- Making sure the home environment is safe and supportive
- New research also suggests hearing loss should be routinely assessed

At senior centers and other community-based

In 2008, falls were the leading cause of unintentional injury visits to Kentucky Emergency Departments for every age group. Among those ages 65 and older, falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries; thus, the chances of falling and of being seriously injured in a fall increase with age.



organizations across the United States, programs like *A Matter of Balance*, *Tai Chi* and *Stepping On*, help older adults gain strength and improve balance and confidence to help them live healthier lives and preserve their independence.

Contact your local Extension office for more information and/or sign up for a falls prevention program.

For more information, please visit:

- National Council on Aging: www.ncoa.org/FPAD
- Kentucky Safe Aging Coalition: <http://safekentucky.org/index.php/top-menu-older-adults-safety>
- No Falls Kentucky: <http://nofalls.org>

BULLETIN ADAPTED FROM:

National Council on Aging <http://www.ncoa.org/improve-health/center-for-healthy-aging/falls-prevention/falls-prevention-awareness-1.html>

REFERENCE:

Kentucky Safe Aging Coalition <http://safekentucky.org/index.php/top-menu-older-adults-safety>

Family Caregiver
Health Bulletin

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