**Fall Prevention**

Each year more than 33% of adults over the age of 65 fall. The most serious injury related to these falls is a hip fracture. Only 50% of elderly people who are hospitalized with a broken hip after a fall are able to return home to live independently after their injury. Once a person has fallen they tend to develop a fear of falling which limits their activities and ultimately increases their risk of falling even more.

**How can you help prevent falls from happening?**

There are many different areas that can be addressed to help reduce the likelihood of a fall. They incorporate medical care, exercise, environment and much more. The following suggestions can be combined to create your own personal fall prevention plan.

**Preventing Falls in the elderly population:**

**Lighting**

Have ample lighting in rooms and hallways with switches at the entrance to each room.

Use nightlights in bedrooms, stairways, hallways and bathrooms.

Eliminate glare by using shades or frosted bulbs.

Consider using remote control light switches.

**Floors, hallways and stairs**

Move electrical cords so they are not lying in main walking areas

Fasten rugs firmly to floors and use nonskid backing. Tack down loose ends.

Remove or replace carpeting over thresholds to create smooth transitions between rooms.

Remove clutter – including piles of shoes and/or newspapers.

Only use stairs with handrails on both side for support.

Repair worn carpet on steps.

Apply nonskid treads to steps

Use color-contrasted nonskid tape for additional contrast on steps and landings.

Assure that steps are evenly spaced.

Avoid waxed or polished floors.

**Furniture**

Arrange furniture so that pathways are not obstructed.

Make sure furniture is sturdy – not wobbly

Replace low chairs with higher chairs that are easier to get up from and sit down in.

Use chairs with armrest support.

Add a seat cushion to raise the seat height if needed.

**Storage**

Keep frequently used items at waist height.

Use a long handled reacher to obtain objects that just out of reach.

Install shelves and cupboards at an accessible height.

**Kitchens and Bathrooms**

Place kitchen items within easy reach and avoid storing any items too high or too low.

If you use a step stool, make sure it has a high handle to hold on to.

Keep heavier items on lower shelves.

Use an elevated toilet seat or install a safety frame.

Install grab bars in the tub/shower or use a shower chair.

Apply nonskid strips to the floor and inside the tub/shower.

Avoid using bar soaps – use liquid soap from a dispenser instead.

Put handrails in dressing, shower and toilet areas.

**General Care and Precautions**

Wear shoes with firm nonskid soles. Avoid loose-fitting slippers that can lead to tripping.

Only wear low-heeled shoes.

Avoid risky behavior, such as standing on a ladder unaided.

Always rise slowly and avoid rushing.

Avoid clutter.

**Your Health**

Talk to your Doctor about any concerns you have including a fear of falling.

Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals.

Perform moderate weight bearing exercises on a regular basis.

Avoid alcohol.

See an Opthamologist (eye doctor) once per year.

Take care of your feet. Have them examined if they are painful when walking.

Ask about medications that might cause dizziness or fainting.

Use a cane or walker if it is recommended for you.

Contact your physician with any health concern and after any fall.

**Balance Screening**

If your local Community Center or Health Center offers free balance screening take advantage of it. The purpose of Balance Screening and Fall Prevention Programs is to identify the risk factors and modify them to provide a safe environment for older adults. These programs are a useful tool to improve quality of life and emotional and physical well-being. The goal is to help people continue as active and safe participants in their lives, with their families and within their communities.

**Sign up for our FREE monthly tip sheet.**

This month’s one-page, printable, Fall Safety Tips Guide is sure to provide easy to accomplish tasks to help keep you or your loved one safe at home.