

Taking Steps to Prevent Falls

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The National Council on Aging and the Falls Free® Coalition recognize September 22 as Falls Prevention Awareness Day. It's a reminder for professionals, caregivers and seniors to take extra precautions to avoid falls. To keep your older loved one safe, here are simple steps to take to prevent falls and fall-related injuries:

Schedule regular physician visits. Undiagnosed medical conditions often attribute to falls. Regular physician visits can provide testing to ensure side effects from medications, sensory impairments, walking with an unsteady gait, and the loss of sensation in feet due to poor circulation, diabetes, or other factors aren't increasing your loved one's risk.

Get moving! Just like regular exams are important so is scheduling time for daily physical activity. Ensuring your senior is partaking in evidence-based exercise programs with emphasis on strength, mobility, and balance exercises are essential for sustaining a healthy lifestyle.

Clean up the clutter. Don't wait for a fall to occur, take steps now to make sure your senior's environment is safe. Remove items from landings and stairways, and secure loose carpeting.

Use assistive devices. Reduce their risk of falling, especially when traveling over uneven surfaces, like a parking lot or driveway, by using a walker, cane, scooter or wheelchair.

Still worried about falling or falling again? Consider your senior's overall health by discussing a move to a senior living community. Most senior communities offer evidence-based exercises, therapies and wellness programs, with objective assessment tools to help your loved one remain as independent as possible. Schedule a tour of the senior living community of interest and while visiting discuss any concerns with the counselor. He or she is an excellent guide and can provide community resources and information to help prevent falls. Be proactive and help to keep your older loved one safe this season.