



NATIONAL FALLS PREVENTION AWARENESS DAY: WHAT CAN CAREGIVERS DO TO HELP?

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries for older Americans but falling is not an inevitable result of aging. This September 22 is National Falls Prevention Awareness Day and part of the solution in reducing the incidence of falls is educating consumers and professionals about the risks of falls and how to prevent falls.

I lost both parents as a result of falls. In the case of my mother, who was living in a retirement home, she had several falls but none resulting in anything more serious than bruises until the fall that broke her hip. That fall ended her ability to live independently and put her on the course of hospitalization, rehab, and long term care placement. She died one day short of the year anniversary of that fall.

North Shore Elder Services' Caregiver Specialists, Kathy Perrella and Pat McMahon, weighed in on the conditions that can contribute to falling and what steps we can possibly take to reduce the risks. "As we age, we see some risk factors for falls increase. Impaired eyesight, hearing, balance and gait can all contribute to someone falling. Chronic diseases that compromise cognitive and sensory functioning have a huge impact on fall risk along with certain medications."

Kathy Perrella suggests that risk factors and preventive measures should be discussed with the older adult by their family members and caregivers as a safety awareness technique. "Most people think a fall is a fluke and don't believe it will happen to them but a fall can change your life forever. Adult children and caregivers can help lessen risk factors by overseeing those areas where safety is questionable and may need to intervene for example, by getting rid of scatter rugs and making sure that clutter does not hinder walking."



"Dementia Conversations"

A FREE Alzheimer's Assoc. Training for Family Caregivers at NSES on Nov.14, 4-6pm

Register with Kathy Perrella, NSES, 978-624-2214

Caregiver Resources:

Our Family Caregiver Specialists have identified concerns & questions that are commonly discussed in support groups and counseling sessions. Check our blog at www.nselder.org for our monthly Caregiver topic. We'll provide you with some resources & options for handling specific issues.

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www.facebook.com/NorthShoreElderServices

Pat McMahon recommends that “if you are concerned about safety issues in the home environment, check with the primary care physician who can order a home safety evaluation through the VNA.”

Kathy and Pat both emphasize that keeping active and moving is important to fall prevention. “You want to do anything you can to strengthen yourself. That is what is so valuable about fall prevention programs like **Matter of Balance**.” NSES is currently conducting Matter of Balance classes at the Salem Council on Aging on Tuesdays from 1:30pm – 3:30pm for an eight week period. To find out more about participating in these sessions, contact Cate O’Hara, NSES’ Community Resource Coordinator at 978-406-4590 or cohara@nselder.org. Check <http://nselder.org/what-we-do/live-well-age-well/> for more information.

Another resource to take advantage of is the Council on Aging’s **Kiosk for Living Well**. There is a Move-Safe Counselor who visits the Kiosks monthly and is available to address falls prevention and safety issues. Check with your local Council on Aging office for the times of those visits.

There is a comprehensive **safety checklist** <https://www.ncoa.org/resources/check-for-safety-at-home-fall-prevention-checklist-for-older-adults/> published by the National Center for Injury Prevention & Control and Centers for Disease Control & Prevention that would be a good reference tool to consult.

As caregivers, we can do our part in keeping our loved ones safe by examining risk factors for falls and putting simple measures in place to ensure a safer environment by which the incidence of falls can be decreased. Falls do not have to be inevitable.

To read our blog on falls prevention in it’s entirety, go to our website www.nselder.org.

