

Panhandle

Public Health District

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September is Fall Prevention Awareness Month: Simple Steps Can Help You Stay Strong, Steady and Independent

A fall can happen in just a moment, but its effects can last much longer. This September, during Fall Prevention Awareness Month, Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) is encouraging older adults, families and caregivers to take simple steps to reduce fall risk and help people remain healthy, active and independent.

Falls are the leading cause of injury among adults age 65 and older, but they are not an inevitable part of aging. Many falls can be prevented by improving strength and balance, reviewing medications, making homes safer and talking with a healthcare provider about individual risk factors.

More than one in four adults age 65 and older report falling each year. In Nebraska, about 28% of older adults report a fall, representing an estimated 83,700 Nebraskans age 65 and older.

"Preventing falls is about staying strong and confident so we can continue doing the things we enjoy," said Kim Haas, Tai Chi instructor. "Small changes can make a big difference in helping us stay active and independent as we age."

Take Steps Today to Reduce Your Risk

PPHD encourages older adults and their families to focus on a few important fall-prevention strategies:

- Keep moving. Regular physical activity that builds leg strength, mobility and balance can help reduce fall risk. Activities such as walking, strength exercises and Tai Chi can help.
- Talk with your healthcare provider. Let your provider know if you have fallen, feel unsteady or are concerned about falling.



- Review your medications. Some prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause dizziness, sleepiness or other side effects that may increase fall risk. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist to review your medications.
- Check your vision and hearing. Changes in vision and hearing can affect balance and awareness of your surroundings.
- Make your home safer. Remove clutter and tripping hazards, improve lighting, secure loose rugs, install handrails on stairs and consider grab bars in bathrooms.
- Choose supportive footwear. Shoes that fit well and provide good traction and support can help you stay steady.
- Don't ignore a fall or near-fall. Even if you are not injured, a fall or feeling unsteady can be an important signal to talk with your healthcare provider.

Build Strength and Confidence

Fear of falling can sometimes cause people to become less active. Unfortunately, becoming less active can lead to decreased strength and balance, which may actually increase fall risk.

The goal of fall prevention is not to limit activity. Instead, it is to help people build the strength, balance and confidence they need to keep moving and keep doing the things that matter to them.

Evidence-based fall prevention programs can help older adults improve strength and balance, learn strategies for reducing fall risk and build confidence in everyday activities.

Panhandle Public Health District offers and supports evidence-based programs throughout the Nebraska Panhandle designed to help adults stay active, healthy and independent. Residents interested in upcoming fall prevention programs, classes or community resources are encouraged to contact PPHD at 308-220-8020.

This September, take a few minutes to think about your own fall risk—or check in with a parent, grandparent, neighbor or friend. A conversation, medication review, home safety check or commitment to becoming a little stronger could help prevent the next fall.

Falls can happen, but many falls can be prevented. Stay strong. Stay steady. Stay independent.

For more information about local health programs and resources, contact Nicole Berosek, Wellness and Prevention Program Manager, at nberosek@pphd.ne.gov, or 308-279-3496.

Did you see the latest PWWC newsletter? If not, check it out here: <https://pphd.ne.gov/pwwc.html> For additional information about worksite wellness, visit <http://www.pphd.ne.gov/pwwc.html> or call Berosek at 308-279-3496. The Panhandle Worksite Wellness Council is proudly part of Panhandle Public Health District.

The Council specializes in supporting employers in the Panhandle region. We recognize that many employers support a diverse and remote workforce and offer innovative ways to overcome the challenge of working with a virtual team. We understand that many of our employers do not have full-time wellness resources and work to provide resources and training to make running a worksite wellness program as easy as possible.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.



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