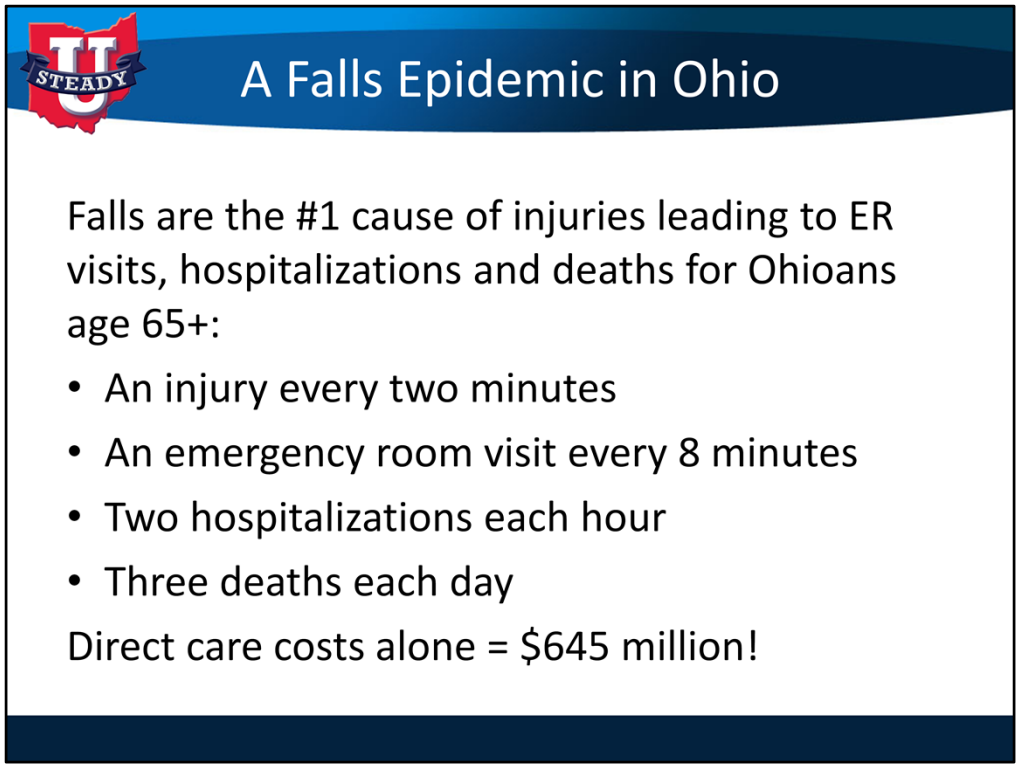
Hi, I'm [NAME] of [ORGANIZATION], and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today about STEADY U Ohio, the state's new initiative to combat the epidemic of falls among older adults.

[MY ORGANIZATION] is proud to be a part of STEADY U Ohio because [STATE A REASON THAT FALLS PREVENTION IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR ORGANIZATION].

Everyone has a "fall story." Think about yours. When was the last time you fell down (or almost fell)? How did it affect you? How did it compare to other times you may have fallen in the past?

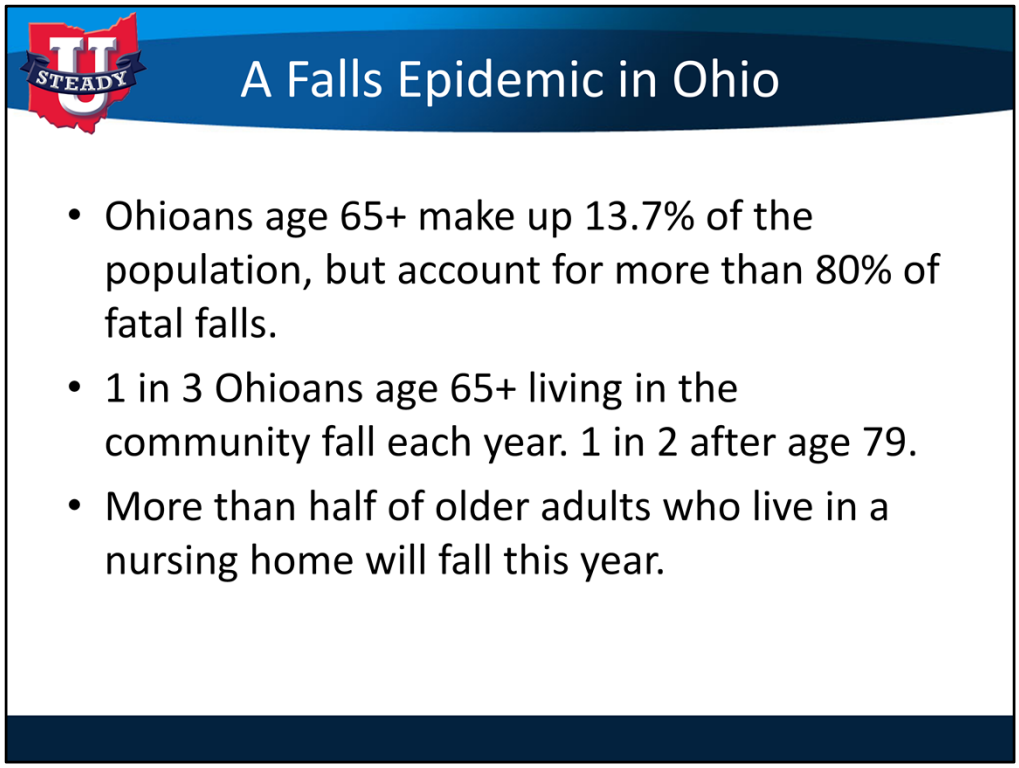
With that in mind, let's watch a brief video that explains why we have launched STEADY U Ohio.

[VIDEO WILL GO BLACK WHEN FINISHED PLAYING. CLICK OR PRESS A BUTTON TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT SLIDE]

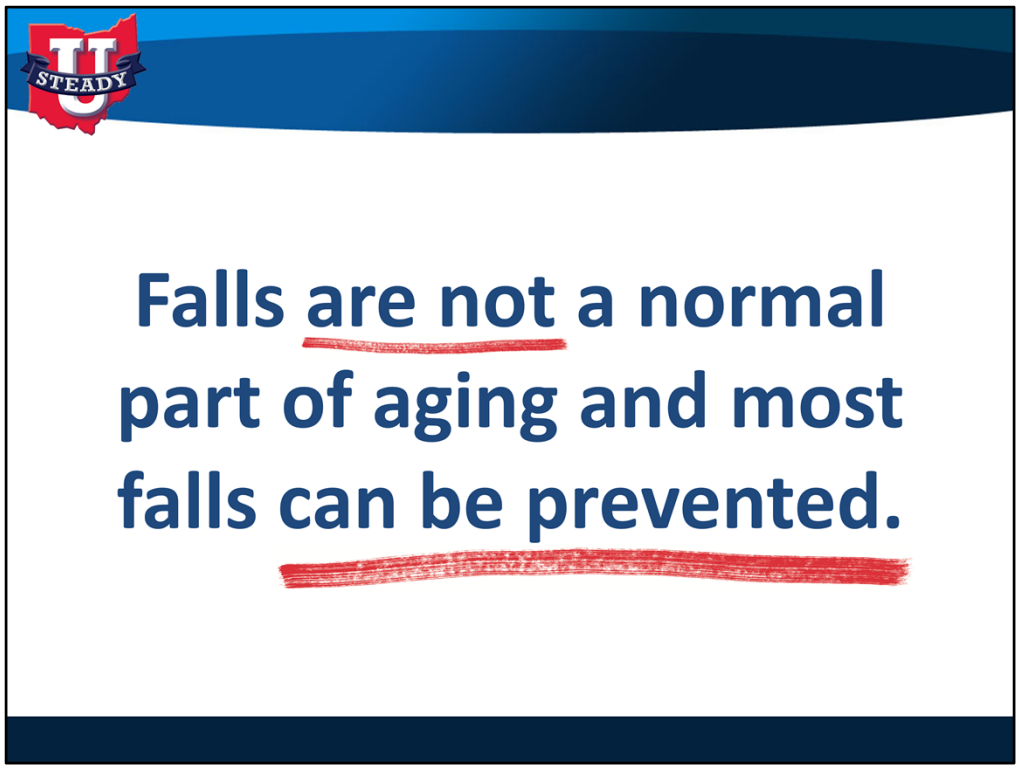


Let's look at those statistics in a little more detail.

[EMPHASIZE FIRST PARAGRAPH AND LAST NOTE REGARDING COSTS]



Older adults are affected disproportionately. While they make up around 14% of our population, they account for more than 80% of fatal falls!



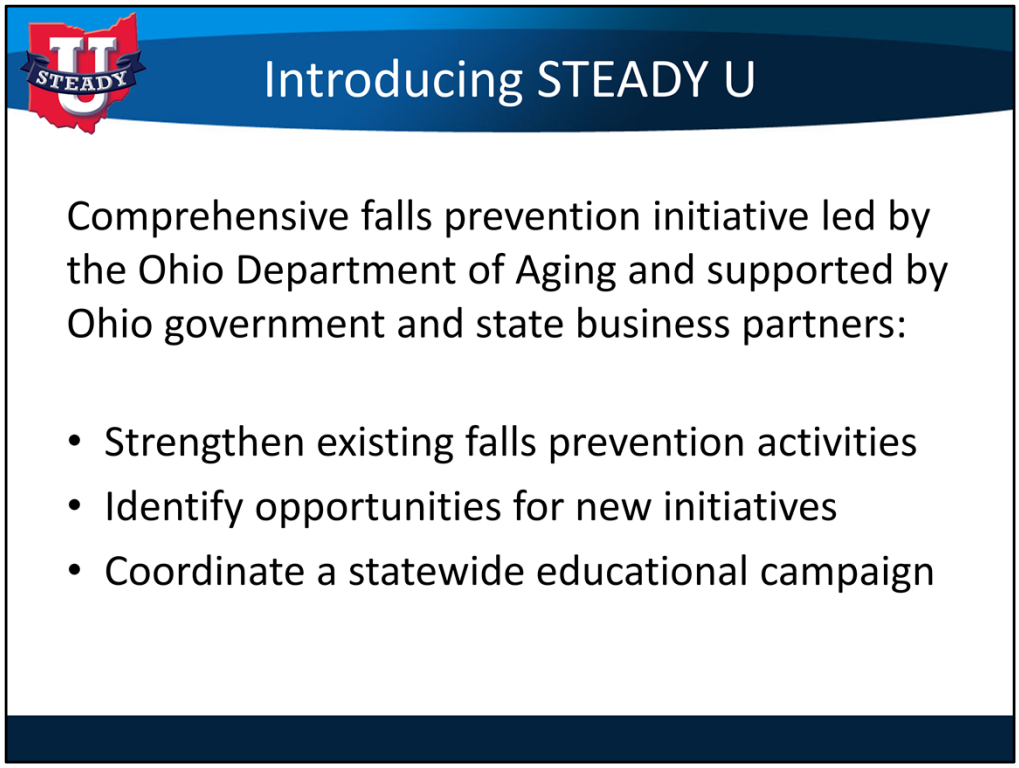
Facing these statistics, it could be easy to assume that falls are a normal part of aging, but they are not!

Our society tends to have a “declinist” view of aging: That our strength and abilities decrease as we get older.

Yes, body changes from aging can make us more susceptible to falls and fall-related injuries, but how we change our *habits, health, care and environment* are just as important.

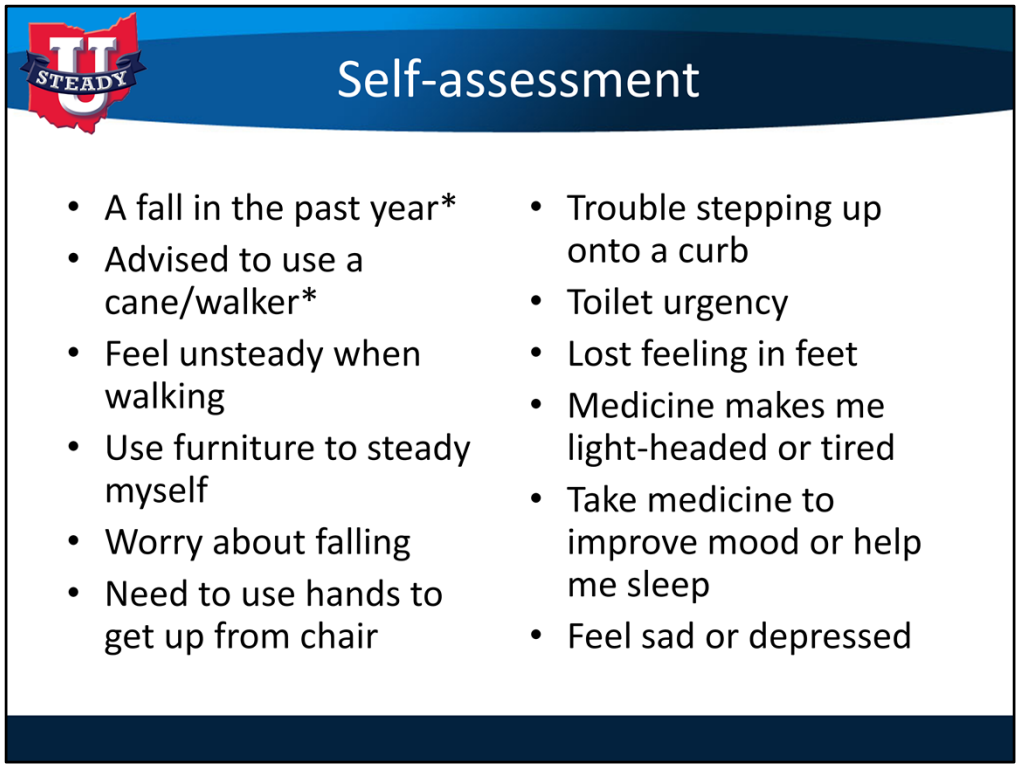
Have you ever met someone who said they wanted to be frailer, sicker and more dependent on others? I know I haven’t.

The bottom line is that falls are something each of us has the power to control.



That is why we have launched STEADY U Ohio. The initiative engages multiple state agencies, as well as business and community partners to ensure that every county, every community and every individual knows what we can do to prevent falls and falls-related injuries.

To do this, we will raise awareness of the falls epidemic, recognize existing initiatives and determine if we can make them better, and look for unmet needs and promising practices that we can bring to Ohio.



Before we take a look at the specific strategies of STEADY U Ohio, let's consider why people fall.

Please take a few moments to take our falls risk self-assessment.

Read these statements, and for each one that applies to you, give yourself one point. Give yourself two points for the items marked with an asterisk.

You don't have to identify yourself, but if you scored four or more points, you may be at a significant risk for falls.

You should discuss with your doctor any of these statements that apply to you.

Several personal factors contribute to our risk of falling.

[IF YOU HAVE A PERSONAL STORY ABOUT A PERSONAL FACTOR THAT CAUSED YOU OR A LOVED ONE TO FALL OR NEARLY FALL, SHARE WITH THE GROUP IF YOU ARE COMFORTABLE]

Perhaps the most compelling of these is the fear of falling. Think back to that assessment and the two items that carried two points… The first one was that you have fallen in the past.

Many older adults who fall, regardless of whether or not they were injured, develop a fear of falling. Why do you think this is? [ALLOW TIME FOR GROUP TO RESPOND]

And, what are some of the changes in our behavior out of fear that can actually increase our risk? [ALLOW TIME FOR GROUP TO RESPOND]

The fact is that our risk of falling goes down the instant that we stop being afraid of falling.

In addition, there are medical factors that can increase our falls risk.

[IF YOU HAVE A PERSONAL STORY ABOUT A MEDICAL FACTOR THAT CAUSED YOU OR A LOVED ONE TO FALL OR NEARLY FALL, SHARE WITH THE GROUP IF YOU ARE COMFORTABLE]

[OPTIONAL STORY TO SHARE:]

A physical therapist who works in home care shared with us the story of a client who was falling frequently. To figure out what was going on, they started to document her daily activities and found a disturbing pattern:

She ate breakfast at 8, and fell at 9.
She ate lunch at Noon, and fell at 1.
She ate dinner at 5, and fell at 6.

About an hour after each meal, she had a strong urge to use the bathroom. Rushing to get to the toilet was what was causing her to fall.

They adjusted her care plan so that an aide would assist her to the bathroom about 45 minutes after each meal. This almost completely stopped the falls.

What Causes Falls?

Environmental factors:

- Tripping hazards (e.g., thresholds, rugs, cords, clutter, uneven surfaces)
- Insufficient lighting
- Unsafe stairs
- Poor design and organization
- Slippery/shiny floors
- Pets

Finally, environmental factors play a role in our falls risk. As we interact with the world around us, we must be vigilant to spot and avoid hazards that can cause us to slip or trip.

[IF YOU HAVE A PERSONAL STORY ABOUT AN ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR THAT CAUSED YOU OR A LOVED ONE TO FALL OR NEARLY FALL, SHARE WITH THE GROUP IF YOU ARE COMFORTABLE]

United We Stand…

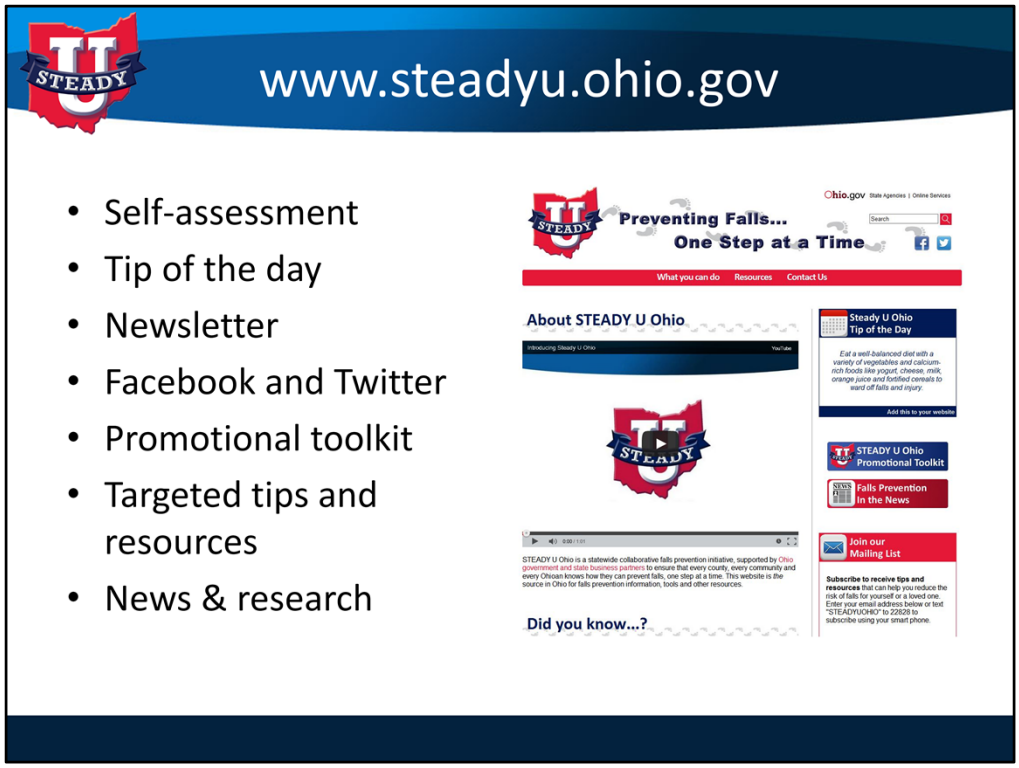
STEADY U reaches out to:

- Older Ohioans & baby boomers
- Family members/caregivers
- Doctors, nurses & other medical staff
- Nursing home & other care facility staff & leaders
- Business owners, managers and employees
- Community leaders and groups

Because falls risks are everywhere, and both internal and external, STEADY U Ohio uses a 360-degree approach to engage and bring the topic of falls prevention to the forefront for individuals, families, businesses, care providers and community leaders.

STEADY U Ohio has seven main strategies to achieve its goals of reducing the incidence of falls and fall-related injuries among older adults.

Let’s take a few moments to look at each one.



First, we have created a website – www.steadyu.ohio.gov – that is a one-stop shop for falls prevention information, tips, news, tools and resources.

I invite you to visit the site today and sign up for our newsletter.

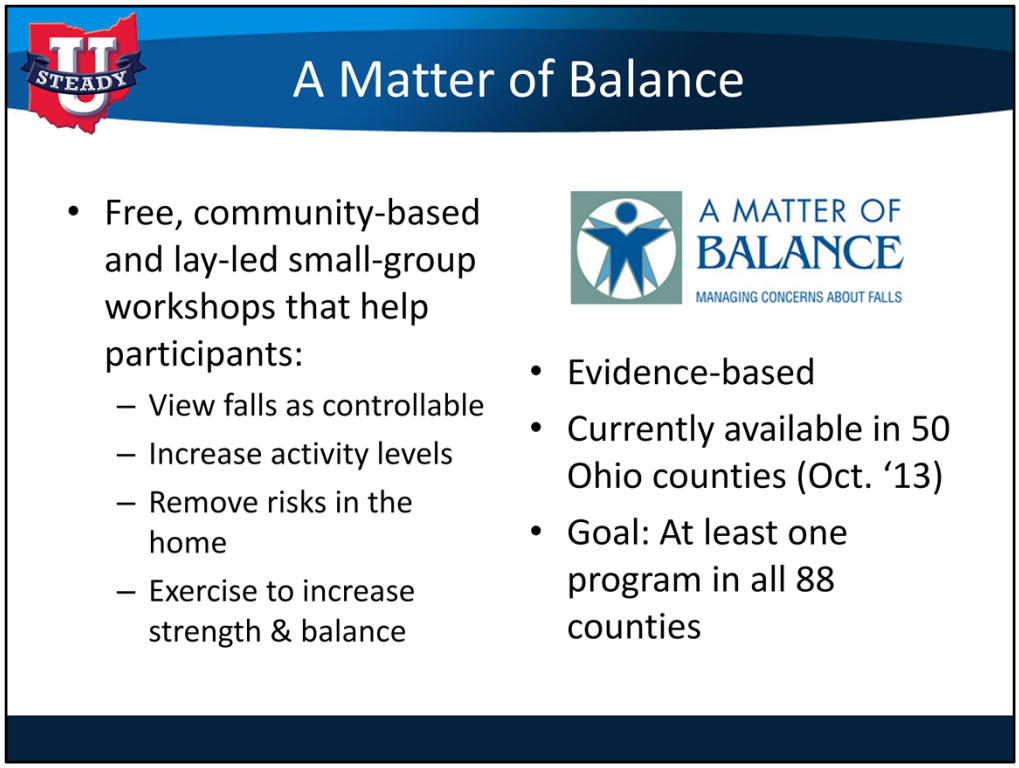
I also invite you to click the link to the promotional toolkit to download brochures, fact sheets, HTML code and other resources to help spread the word about the initiative.

You can visit the website or follow us on Facebook or Twitter for a falls prevention tip of the day. On social media, we also share the latest news and information, as well as timely and seasonal falls prevention tips.

You can take the same self-assessment we did earlier, but the online version adds instant feedback and can be printed to take and discuss with your doctor.

Businesses can download resources like a checklist to spot hazards in the workplace, and a sample falls prevention policy. Communities can download a “walkability” assessment.

Visit often, as the site is constantly evolving.

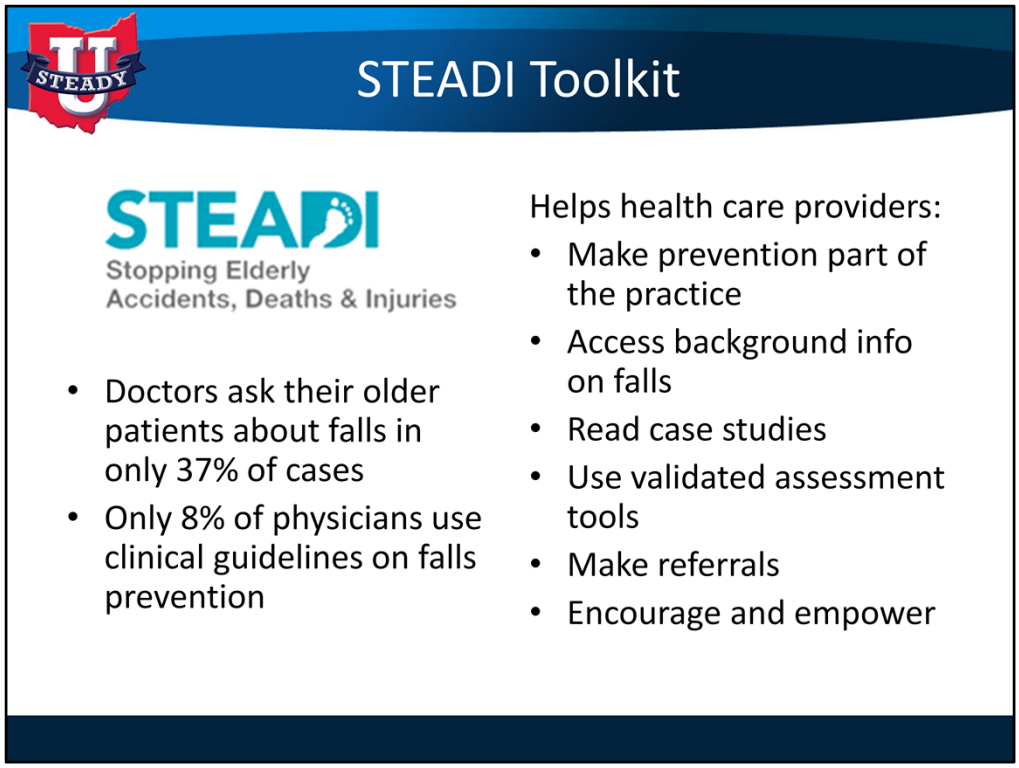


Our second strategy is to expand a program called "A Matter of Balance" statewide.

A Matter of Balance is a proven intervention that helps older adults recognize that they can control their risk factors, and gives them strategies to safely increase their strength and balance.

As of October, 2013, the program was available in 50 Ohio counties.

You can find A Matter of Balance programs near you on the STEADY U Ohio website.



According to recent research, fewer than 2 in 5 doctors talk to their older patients about falls.

And, of those who do, less than 1 in 10 use established clinical guidelines on falls prevention

The STEADI Toolkit was developed by the CDC's Injury Center to give health care providers tools and resources they can use incorporate falls prevention into their practice. Tools include conversation starters, standardized gait and balance tests, educational handouts and more.

The STEADI Toolkit is made available to health care providers at no cost via the Ohio Department of Health. STEADY U Ohio is facilitating access to these resources by reaching out to the medical and long-term care communities.

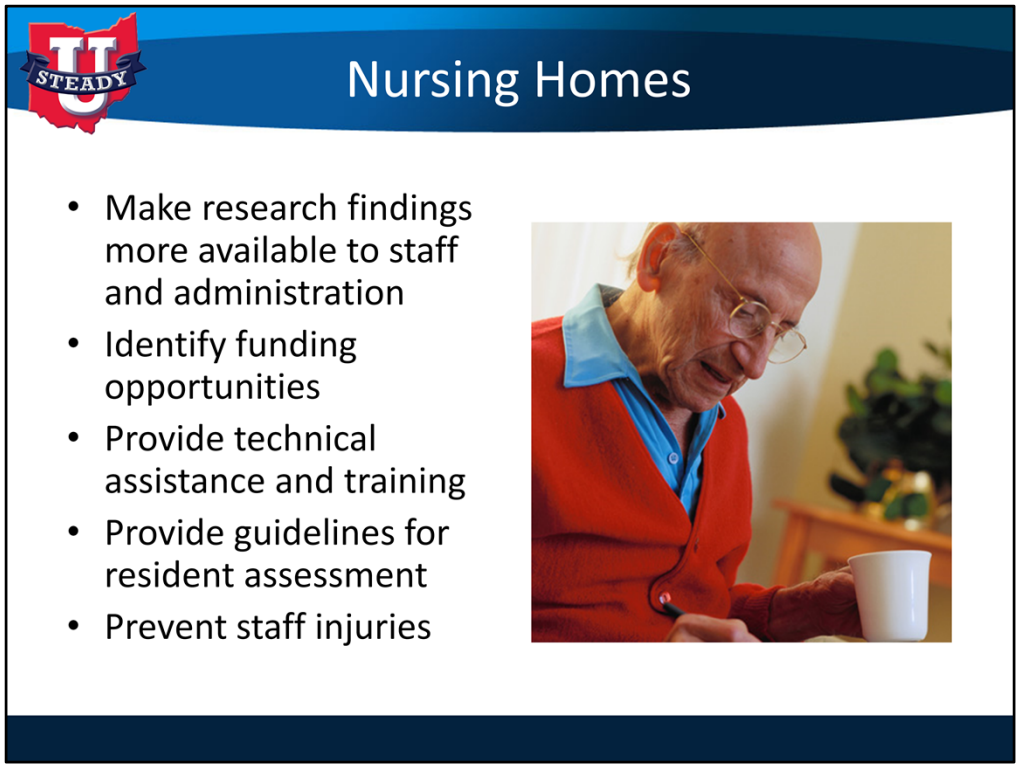
Businesses have a dual role in falls prevention:

- Slips, trips and falls are the leading cause for injury among workers, according to the Ohio BWC. More than 1 in 5 workplace injuries are due to falls.
- Slipping and tripping hazards for customers and visitors have several impacts on the company's bottom line, such as lost business/productivity, possible legal costs, etc.

We are reaching out to the business community through partnerships with the Ohio Council of Retail Merchants and other organizations to help every Ohio business become a "Fall-free Zone."

We are providing them with tips about housekeeping, environmental design, equipment, clothing and more.

We also worked with BWC to develop an incident report, hazard checklist and sample falls prevention policy.



Ohio's nursing homes are undergoing a transition from hospital-like environments to more home-like places.

We are arming nursing home administrators and staff with the latest research about falls prevention strategies that can be used by staff to help residents stay safe.

In addition, we are helping them identify environmental hazards, including identifying funding opportunities to make modifications.

Examples of environmental changes include:
- Better lighting in all parts of the home
- Repairs to floors and floor coverings
- Lighting improvements
- Modernizing building and fire codes to allow for more seating in hallways, etc.

Alzheimer's Partnerships

- Elders with Alzheimer's are three times more likely to suffer hip fractures
- Also more likely to die from injury
- Falls could be an early sign of Alzheimer's
- STEADY U will support Alz. Assn. efforts

We know that people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are more susceptible to injuries from falls, including more likely to die.

Also, a pattern of falls could indicate the onset or progression of the disease.

We are working with Ohio's Alzheimer's Associations to explore and implement falls prevention initiatives specifically designed for individuals with dementia, their caregivers and the professionals who care for and serve them.

We believe that our elders should be allowed to remain in their own homes for as long as they are able, even as their care needs change.

To do so, we need to make sure that elders have safe environments.

Starting with our PASSPORT program, which provides in-home care options for people with Medicaid, we are integrating a falls assessment into our intake process and annual care planning.

Eventually, this will be standard practice in all Medicaid waiver programs, and we hope the provider community sees the value in it as well.

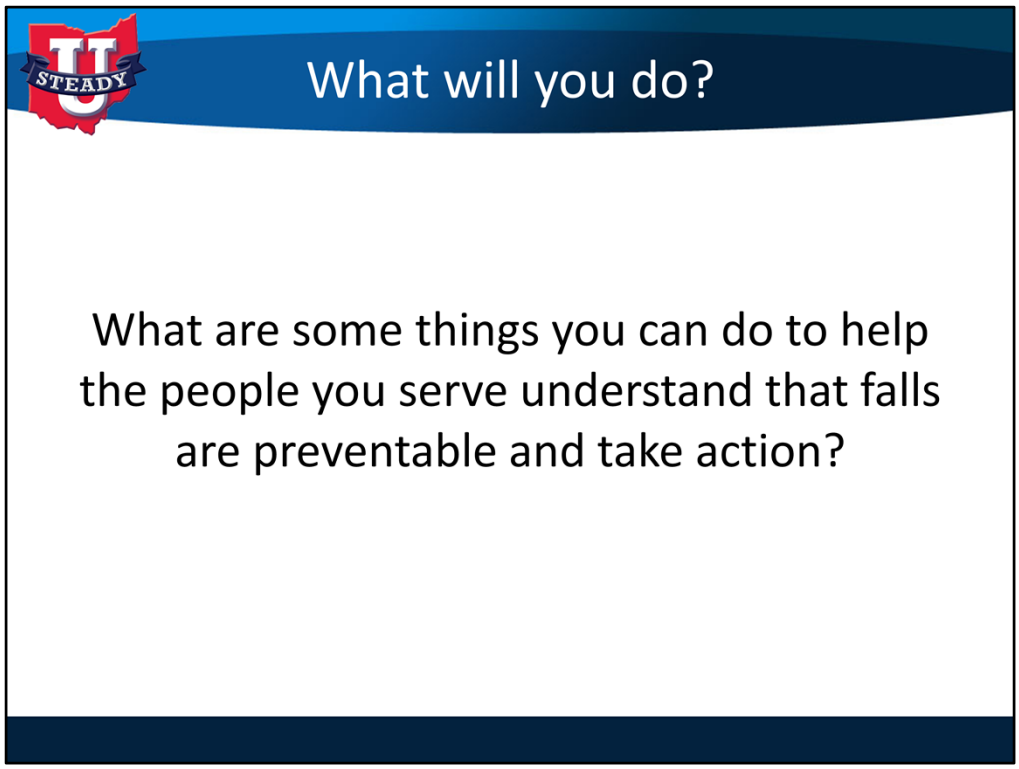
When we identify falls hazards, we can use available community resources to address them, including:

- Installing ramps
- Minor home repairs and modifications
- Transportation options
- Home-delivered meals

Our partners include an array of Government agencies, far beyond just your usual health and human services agencies.

Other key partners include the Area Agencies on Aging, local health departments.

From the private sector, we have medical and long-term care associations, as well as the business community and university system.

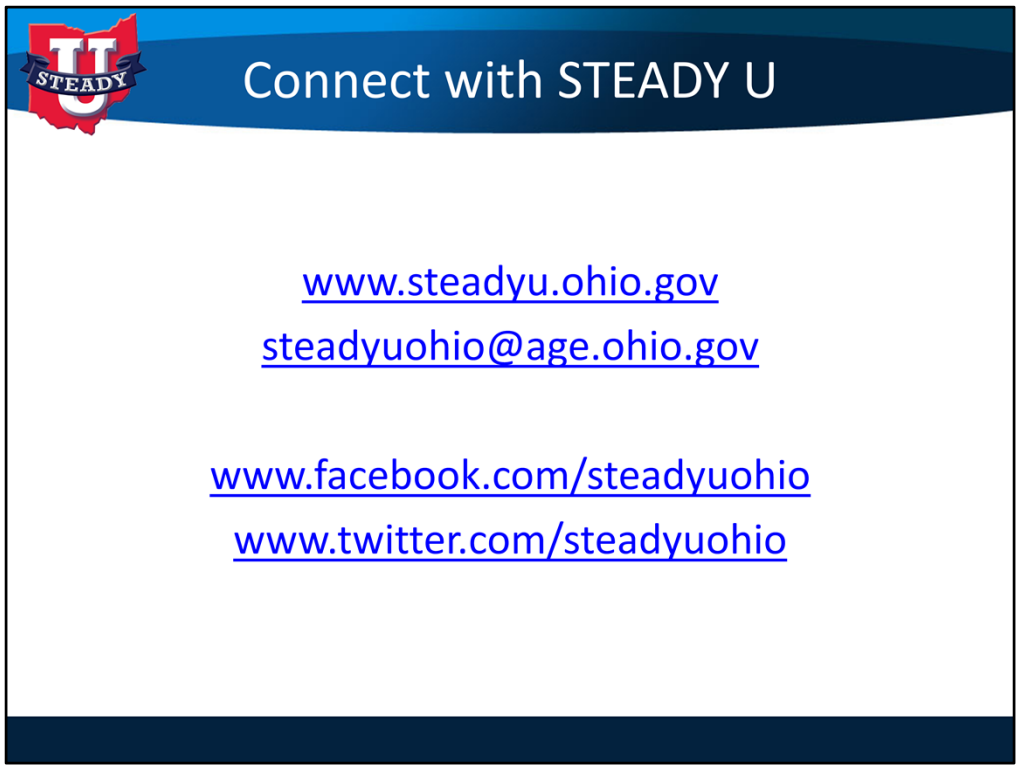


Before I wrap and see if you have any questions, I have one question for you:

"What can you do to help prevent falls among the people you serve?"

[IDEAS TO STOKE THE CONVERSATION]

- Download brochures and tip sheets from our website and distribute
- Become a provider for A Matter of Balance, or help your clients access available classes
- Incorporate falls prevention strategies into your daily operations
- Talk to your local community and business leaders about the importance of falls prevention
- Make changes in your own health, care and environment



To get in touch with STEADY U Ohio, visit our website and click the “Contact Us” link.

Or, email steadyuohio@age.ohio.gov

You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

Thank you for letting me talk to you today about Ohio’s efforts to prevent falls, one step at at time.

Are there any questions?