



**Preventing Falls...  
One Step at a Time**

***Falls are the leading cause of injury-related deaths and the most common cause of hospital admissions for trauma in older Ohioans. Health care providers, like doctors, nurses, physical therapist, pharmacists, home health aides, senior center staff and others, are uniquely positioned to actively assess their patients' risk and teach them prevention strategies.***

Older adults account for a disproportionate share of fall-related injuries. While Ohioans age 65 and older are 13.7 percent of our population, they account for more than 80 percent of fatal falls.

### **How Home Health Agencies Can Prevent Falls**

- Identify consumers who use a walker or other assistive device and plan time that is sufficient to provide the services they need.
- Monitor homes for falls hazards (cords, rugs, poor lighting, etc.) and educate consumers about what they can do to reduce their risk of falling.
- Have and call alternate phone contacts for all consumers in case a consumer does not answer the door on a scheduled care day.
- Train staff to recognize consumers who regularly wear safety alert devices or use walkers, canes or wheelchairs. Empower staff to start a conversation with these consumers if they see them not using their assistive devices.
- Be aware of extreme consumer weight loss or gain. Improper nutrition may lead to muscle weakness and dizziness, which could result in a fall.
- Have a nurse monitor consumers' prescriptions and check to see they are taking their medications as directed. Problems with medications should be communicated to their case manager and physician.
- Identify and report to case managers any needs for home modifications or assistive devices that could reduce falls, and include them in the consumer's care plan.
- Encourage consumers to ask their doctors about a falls risk assessment and for help identifying appropriate physical activity, especially if they have fallen or have a fear of falling.
- Ensure that consumers who wear glasses or hearing aides are wearing them and that they fit properly.
- Include a falls risk assessment in the initial and on-going assessments of each consumer. If a consumer has a history of falling, document their activities and look for patterns.
- Create a falls prevention policy for your agency and ensure that staff are aware of and understand it. Have at least one staff member trained in home hazard risk assessment (check with your local health district for training opportunities).

**For more tips and resources to prevent falls, visit:**

**[www.steadyu.ohio.gov](http://www.steadyu.ohio.gov)**