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“Reducing Fall Risks”

For many older adults, the fear of falling is a daily reality and one with good reason. Across the country, falls are a leading cause of injury among seniors, sending thousands to emergency rooms each day. Nationally, one in four adults reports falling each year. In Kansas, that number is even higher, nearly 30 percent. National statistics show that every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in an emergency room because of a fall. One in five falls leads to serious injury, such as broken bones or a traumatic brain injury. Nearly 88 percent of emergency room visits for hip fractures are caused by falls. These injuries can have lasting consequences, often leading to a loss of independence, reduced mobility, or extended rehabilitation.

The National Council on Aging recognizes September as Fall Prevention Month. The week of September 22-26 is also set aside as Falls Prevention Week. These observances are a reminder that while falls are common, they are not an inevitable part of aging. With awareness and proactive steps, many falls can be prevented.

Kansas State University Aging specialist Erin Martinez stresses that one of the most effective ways to prevent falls is through routine health checks and open conversations with medical providers. “If you’re feeling dizzy, unsteady, or just not quite right, it may be time to see your doctor.” Sometimes these issues can be addressed by reviewing medications and their side effects. Other times, it’s about building strength and balance through regular exercise.

Prevention also begins at home, where many hazards can be easily overlooked. Common risk factors include throw rugs, cluttered furniture, uneven sidewalks, poor lighting, and extension cords stretched across walkways. Fortunately, many of these can be addressed with simple adjustments. Martinez recommends securing or removing throw rugs, adding solar-powered lighting outside, and rearranging furniture to create clear, safe pathways. Assistive devices can also play a key role. Grab bars in bathrooms, nonslip mats in showers, and sturdy handrails on both sides of stairways are affordable, effective options. Making these modifications helps older adults maintain independence while reducing their risk of falling.

Martinez notes that prevention is not just about removing risks, it is also about building resilience. One of the best fall prevention strategies is to stay active. Focus on balance, flexibility, and strength. By being proactive, whether that’s talking with your doctor, making changes around your home, or exercising, you can help reduce your fall risk and continue living independently and safely.

Information comes from Kansas State University Publications.

Join us for a hands-on nutrition series where kids in 2nd–5th grades will learn about building balanced plates, choosing healthy snacks, and making smart food choices. Each session includes a fun, easy recipe they can prepare and enjoy! Sessions will be held at Eureka Methodist Church on Sept. 30, and Oct. 14 from 4:30–5:30 PM. To sign up, please contact the Extension Office.