

10 MYTHS ABOUT OLDER ADULTS & FALLS



Many people think falls are a normal part of aging. The truth is, they're not. Most falls can be prevented -- and you have the power to reduce your risk. Exercising, managing your medications, having your vision checked, and making your living environment safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall. Read more to find out the ten most common myths about falls and set the record straight with the reality instead.

FALLING HAPPENS TO OTHER PEOPLE, NOT ME

Reality: Many people think, "It won't happen to me." But the truth is that 1 in 4 older adults fall every year in the U.S. Falls are more frequent in Idaho, where 1 in 3 older adults fall each year.



FALLING IS SOMETHING NORMAL THAT HAPPENS AS YOU GROW OLDER.

Reality: Falling is not a normal part of aging. Strength and balance exercises, managing your medications, having your vision checked and making your living environment safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall.

IF I LIMIT MY ACTIVITY, I WON'T FALL.

Reality: Some people believe that the best way to prevent falls is to stay at home and limit activity. Not true! Staying physically active will actually help you retain strength and range of motion. Both assist in remaining independent. Social activities are also good for your overall health, engaging your brain and decreasing loneliness.

AS LONG AS I STAY HOME, I CAN AVOID FALLING.

Reality: Over half of all falls take place at home, and falls are 2.5 times more likely to cause injury than car crashes. So, we'd better be sure our homes are safe! Inspect your home for fall risks. Fix simple but serious hazards such as clutter, throw rugs, and poor lighting. Make simple home modifications, such as adding grab bars in the bathroom, a second handrail on stairs, and non-slip paint on outdoor steps.



MUSCLE STRENGTH AND FLEXIBILITY CAN'T BE REGAINED.

Reality: While we do lose muscle as we age, exercise can partially restore strength and flexibility. It's never too late to start an exercise program. Even if you've been a "couch potato" your whole life, becoming active now will benefit you in many ways—including protection from falls.



TAKING MEDICATION DOESN'T INCREASE MY RISK OF FALLING.

Reality: Taking medication may increase your risk of falling. This includes over-the-counter and prescription medicines. Medications affect people in many different ways and can sometimes make you dizzy or sleepy. Be careful when starting a new medication. Talk to your health care provider about potential side effects or interactions of your medications.



I DON'T NEED TO GET MY VISION CHECKED EVERY YEAR.

Reality: Vision is another key risk factor for falls. Aging is associated with some forms of vision loss that increase risk of falling and injury. People with vision problems are more than twice as likely to fall as those without impairment, and 38% of older people with severe visual impairment admitted to having fallen in the previous year. Have your eyes checked at least once a year and update your eyeglasses. For those with low vision there are programs and assistive devices that can help. Ask your optometrist for a referral or contact the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI), their low vision store or low vision clinic. (208) 334-3220 <https://icbvi.idaho.gov>

USING A WALKER OR CANE WILL MAKE ME MORE DEPENDENT.

Reality: Walking aids are very important in helping many older adults maintain or improve their mobility. However, make sure you use these devices safely. Have a physical therapist fit the walker or cane to you and instruct you in its safe use.

I DON'T NEED TO TALK WITH MY FAMILY OR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF I AM CONCERNED ABOUT FALLING. I DON'T WANT TO WORRY THEM, AND I WANT TO KEEP MY INDEPENDENCE.

Reality: Fall prevention is a team effort. Bring it up with your doctor, family, and anyone else who is in a position to help. They want to help you maintain your mobility and reduce your risk of falling.

I DON'T NEED TO TALK TO MY PARENT, SPOUSE OR OTHER OLDER ADULT IF I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR RISK OF FALLING. I DON'T WANT TO WORRY THEM AND REALLY, IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS.

Reality: Let them know about your concerns and offer support to help them maintain the highest degree of independence possible. There are many things you can do, including removing hazards in the home, setting up a vision exam, or finding a fall prevention program. Contact your Idaho Health District for Fit and Fall Proof classes or <http://aging.idaho.gov/falls> for falls prevention seminars, workshops, and other resources.



YOU CAN PREVENT A FALL

This document has been modified from the original created by the National Council on Aging, in order to add Idaho-specific references.

Learn more about preventing falls in Idaho: <http://aging.idaho.gov/falls> | From NCOA: <http://ncoa.org/older-adults/health/prevention/falls-prevention>

