

# Take a Stand Against Falls: Falls Prevention Awareness Week September 21-25, 2020

**DOVER (Sept. 23, 2020)** – The coronavirus pandemic has changed many things. One thing that's still the same: Falling is NOT a normal part of aging. There are steps you can take to reduce your risk.

Falls can be disabling or fatal and are the leading cause of traumatic brain injury in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the U.S., falls are a leading cause of death for adults age 65+, and they are a leading cause of nonfatal injuries for almost all age groups.

To raise awareness about this public health issue, the National Council on Aging (NCOA) designates the week of September 21-25, 2020 as National Falls Prevention Awareness Week. Governor John Carney and Lieutenant Governor Bethany Hall-Long join NCOA in proclaiming that same week as Falls Prevention Awareness Week in Delaware. While falls can occur at any age, adults age 65+ are at greater risk of falling due to multiple factors including age, chronic conditions and disabilities, limited mobility, weak leg muscles, vision problems, Vitamin D deficiency, and use of prescription and over-the-counter medications.

According to the Delaware Coalition for Injury Prevention's (DCIP) Falls Prevention Team, older adults can remain steady on their feet with regular physical activities such as Tai Chi, which focus on improving balance and strengthening muscles. The team also encourages participation in "A Matter of Balance" and similar evidence-based programs that address fear of falling while building strength and flexibility

through easy and effective exercises. To find an “A Matter of Balance” program near you, call Volunteer Delaware 50+ at 302-255-9882 in New Castle County and 302-515-3020 in Kent and Sussex counties.

ChristianaCare offers a ThinkFirst to Prevent Falls© program, which can be done either virtually or in person and addresses home modifications, medications, balance, healthy eating, and other strategies to prevent falls. To schedule this program or for any questions regarding ThinkFirst©, send an email to [kaitlyn.angermeier@christianacare.org](mailto:kaitlyn.angermeier@christianacare.org). Additionally, the Delaware Falls Prevention Team is holding virtual ThinkFirst© programs and producing information that will be distributed to local community centers and libraries.

Since falls occur to people of all ages, municipalities, businesses, schools, and organizations should maintain walkways, paint curbs and slopes, improve lighting, install handrails, and provide ramps, automatic doors, and curb cuts to assist those with mobility issues. At home, remove fall hazards such as slippery rugs, loose steps, wires or cables, and clutter. Additionally, use night lights, replace worn footwear, and ensure that handrails are sturdy.

Since the fear of falling can result in social isolation and limited activity for older adults, it is important for Delawareans to check on their loved ones and neighbors, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Falls are painful and can be disabling, leading to drastic life changes and costing an average of \$30,000 per fall injury in hospital expenses alone, according to the CDC. The number of adults over 64 admitted to Delaware hospitals for treatment of fall injuries rose from 2,007 in 2013 to 2,623 in 2018, according to the Delaware Trauma System Registry.

A safe, injury-free Delaware is the vision of the DCIP, which is staffed by the Division of Public Health Office of

Emergency Medical Services. For more information about the DCIP's Falls Prevention Team, contact Diana Curtis at 302-744-6295 or [Diana\\_Curtis@bayhealth.org](mailto:Diana_Curtis@bayhealth.org).

Access information about falls, injury prevention, and services, including support for adults age 65+, through these resources:

- DCIP website: <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dph/ems/injuryprevention.html>
- Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DSAAPD) and Delaware Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) – available 24/7 at 1-800-223-9074. Websites: [www.delawareADRC.com](http://www.delawareADRC.com) and <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dsaapd/adrc.html>
- State Office of Volunteerism, Volunteer Delaware 50+ administers and promotes A Matter of Balance program statewide with support from DSAAPD. At this time, Volunteer Delaware 50+ is virtually engaging volunteer coaches. They will recruit new workshop participants when community classes resume. Website: <https://volunteer.delaware.gov/volunteer-delaware50>
- CDC's website on Older Adult Falls: <https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/index.html>
- NCOA Center for Healthy Aging, National Falls Prevention Resource Center, <https://www.ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention/falls-prevention-awareness-week/>. Visitors can take a 12-question quiz about their risk of falling and access a falls prevention toolkit.

*The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or*

*more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*