

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Department of Health Educates North Dakota Seniors about Preventing Falls

BISMARCK, N.D. – Falls are the leading cause of injury death for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors’ safety and independence, and generate enormous economic and personal costs. In 2015, there were 88 fall-related deaths to North Dakotans age 60 years and older.

“We need to raise awareness of the many preventive measures that can be taken to keep our seniors safe,” said State Health Officer, Dr. Terry Dwelle.

Each year, millions of people age 65 and older are treated in emergency departments because of falls. Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries for those aged 65 and over. The chances of falling and of being seriously injured in a fall increase with age. “Falls are *not* a normal part of aging, we encourage seniors and their families to take proactive steps to prevent falls and stay independent for as long as possible,” said Mandy Slag, Injury Prevention Program Director. Falls are often due to hazards that are easy to overlook, but easy to fix.”

The North Dakota Department of Health recommends these tips for seniors to prevent falls.

- **Get exercise:** Lack of exercise can lead to weak legs, which increases the chance of falling. Exercise programs like Tai Chi and Stepping On can increase strength and improve balance making falls less likely for aging adults.
- **Be mindful of medications:** Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can have side effects like dizziness or drowsiness, which can make falls more likely. Have a doctor or pharmacist review all your medications to reduce the chance of risky side effects and drug interactions.
- **Keep your vision sharp:** Poor vision can make it harder to move around safely. Have your eyes checked every year and wear glasses or contact lenses with the right prescription strength.
- **Eliminate hazards at home.** A home safety check list available from the Department of Health can help identify fall hazards, like clutter and poor lighting.
- **Sign up for a falls prevention class if offered in your area.** There are many areas in North Dakota offering classes to build strength and balance to educate seniors on potential hazards.

For more information or to request a home safety checklist, please contact Mandy Slag, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4537 or e-mail at [mslag@nd.gov](mailto:mslag@nd.gov). Materials may be requested online at [http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/Injury\\_Prevention\\_Order\\_Form.aspx](http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/Injury_Prevention_Order_Form.aspx)

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