

## NEWS RELEASE

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### *Take Proactive Steps to Avoid Falls*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In North Dakota, falls are the leading cause of preventable death for people 60 years and older; it threatens seniors’ safety and independence. In 2017, there were 62 fall-related deaths to North Dakotans 60 years and older.

Each year, millions of older adults nationwide are treated in emergency departments due to falls. The chances of falling and 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,” said Mandy Slag, injury prevention program director. “Falls are often due to hazards that are easy to overlook and easy to fix.”

The North Dakota Department of Health recommends these tips to prevent falls:

- **Eliminate hazards at home** - A home safety checklist available from the North Dakota Department of Health can help you identify fall hazards, like clutter, rugs and poor lighting.
- **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 such as dizziness or drowsiness, which can make falls more likely. Having a doctor or pharmacist review all your medications can help reduce the chance of risky side effects and drug interactions.
- **Keep your vision sharp** - Poor vision can make it harder to move around safely. To ensure you're seeing clearly, have your eyes checked every year and wear glasses or contact lenses with the right prescription strength.
- **Sign up for a falls prevention class if offered in your area** - There are many communities across North Dakota offering classes, such as *Stepping On*, to build strength and balance and to educate seniors on potential hazards.

For more information about *Stepping On* falls prevention workshops for people 60 years and older, 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 [www.ndhealth.gov/injury/Injury\\_Prevention\\_Order\\_Form.aspx](http://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/Injury_Prevention_Order_Form.aspx)

