
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

Preventing falls keeps seniors independent

VICTORIA – Falls are the most common cause of injury for B.C. seniors, despite evidence that shows most are preventable. Nov. 5-11 is Seniors' Fall Prevention Awareness Week, created to raise awareness around the prevention of falls and injuries among older adults.

One in three British Columbians over the age of 65 will experience at least one fall every year. Injury from a fall often results in chronic pain, disability, reduced quality of life and is the main reason why older adults lose their independence. Nearly 40 per cent of all fall-related hospitalizations involve a hip fracture – which greatly impacts the health and well-being of seniors, as well as the B.C. health-care system.

The government of B.C. is working to help educate British Columbians on fall prevention in order to keep seniors safe, active and independent. There are many resources available to help older adults stay fall and injury free, including videos, brochures, booklets and guides. The new edition of the BC Seniors' Guide also provides tips on healthy aging and fall prevention.

In addition to providing resources, the B.C. government supports the prevention of falls by working with health authorities, health-care professionals, injury-prevention experts and the public in developing fall-prevention projects and programs, including:

- Strategies and Actions for Independent Living (SAIL) Falls Prevention Project – a training program for community-health workers and home-health professionals that addresses falls and related risk factors among clients of publicly funded home support services. Health authorities are currently implementing SAIL and are expanding its scope across their regions.
- Framework and Toolkit for Fall Related Injury Prevention in Residential Care – resources for health-care professionals to support planning, implementation, distribution and evaluation of fall-prevention programs in residential care.
- The Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum: www.canadianfallprevention.ca – evidence-based training for health-care professionals on how to design, implement and evaluate a fall-prevention program.
- Primary Care Fall Prevention resources for physicians and other primary-care providers to assist their patients to identify and reduce their fall risks.

Under BC's Family Agenda, the B.C. government invites your input on how to encourage seniors to stay safe, healthy and active. Visit: www.familiesfirstbc.ca to share your ideas.

Quote:**Ralph Sultan, Minister of State for Seniors –**

“Although the risk factors increase with age, falls are not an inevitable part of aging. Knowing how to prevent falls will help keep seniors active, healthy and happy in their homes and communities.”

Quick Facts:

- Most falls can be prevented through five easy steps:
 - doing exercises to increase muscle strength and improve balance.
 - reducing medications known to increase fall risk.
 - correcting vision problems.
 - ensuring adequate levels of vitamin D and calcium through healthy diets and supplements.
 - through home and outdoor modifications to reduce tripping and slipping.
- Seniors with fall-related injuries tend to stay in hospital twice as long as seniors hospitalized for all other reasons.
- Injuries from falls cost the B.C. government over \$195 million annually in direct health costs.

Learn More:

- For more information on fall prevention, visit SeniorsBC: www.gov.bc.ca/fallprevention
- For more fall prevention resources, visit:
www.gpscbc.ca/psp-learning/chronic-disease-management/tools-resources
- BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit: www.injuryresearch.bc.ca
- Centre of Excellence on Mobility, Fall Prevention and Injury in Aging:
www.hiphealth.ca/CEMFIA

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