Frequently Asked Questions about Falls in Older Adults

***What is the age range for older adults?***

Older adults are people 65 years of age or older.

***How frequently do falls occur in older adults?***

One in every three older adults falls per year.

***Of the older adults who sustain a fall, how many require medical treatment?***

More than two million older adults seek medical attention for fall-related injuries each year.

***Where do most falls occur?***

More than half of falls occur at home.

***Are falls an inevitable part of aging?***

No, falls are not a regular part of aging. Many falls can be prevented.

***What prevention tips can we recommend to adults to reduce their risk for falls?***

There are 4 key recommendations that pharmacists can make to older adults to reduce their risk for falls. 1) Recommend regular exercise and vitamin supplementation. Exercise increases strength and improves balance. Vitamin D supplements with calcium can help replace essential nutrients that keep bones strong. Together, exercise and vitamins make falling less frequent. 2) Encourage older adults to talk with their pharmacist about their medications. Some medications can make older adults dizzy or drowsy. This makes falling more likely because it makes maintaining balance difficult. If possible, avoid the use of these medications. Pharmacists can recommend safer medications. 3) Older adults should take measures to maintain good vision. Poor vision can make maintaining balance difficult. Recommend that older adults have their eyes checked yearly. For those who wear eyeglasses or contact lenses, using the correct prescription strength will ensure clear vision. 4) Finally, recommend that older adults eliminate hazards at home. A home safety check can help to identify potential fall hazards that need to be removed or changed.

***What steps can older adults take to reduce their risk of falling at home?***

There are many things older adults can do to reduce their risk of falling at home. Encourage older adults to remove items that can be tripped over, especially from stairs and walkways. These include papers, books, clothes and shoes. Recommend that handrails and lights be installed on all staircases. Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to prevent rugs from slipping. Keep items that are used frequently on lower shelves or cabinets that do not require a stepstool to reach. Put grab bars inside and next to the tub or shower and next to the toilet. Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.

***In addition to the immediate injuries, what long-term consequences do falls have?***

Long-term consequences may include hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries. Both can impact the health and independence of older adults.