Falls are the leading cause of injury to people 65 and older in the United States. Falls can lead to emergency room visits, hospitalization and even death. Falls are not a normal part of aging. There are a variety of reasons why some older adults are at a higher risk for falling: lack of exercise; infrequent meals; a poor diet or just not drinking enough water can create balance issues. Other factors can include: medications; a recent illness or hospital stay; alcohol abuse; poor eyesight; trouble sleeping; the fear of falling; and certain medical conditions including depression and memory problems.

**Fall Prevention**

Most falls occur in the home or just outside the home, and most happen at ground or curb level. Hazards in and outside of the home that can lead to a fall include: poor lighting; cluttered walkways; throw rugs; uneven surfaces; and furniture that is too high or too low can make it difficult to get up or sit down. Below are some home improvements ideas:

- Put automatic night lights in hallways, bathrooms and the kitchen
- Install light switches at the top and bottom of stairways
- Install grab bars and non-skid strips in bathtubs and showers
- Make sure extension cords are not in walkway
- Install an elevated toilet seat
- Install a railing on both sides of stairways and long hallways
- Remove all throw rugs and loose carpeting
- If canes or walkers are used, make sure they are correctly fitted and walking paths and entry ways are wide enough

**QUICK TIPS**

- Perform routine home safety checks (both indoor and outdoor) for poor lighting and tripping hazards
- Regular healthcare check-ups for an older adult should include an eye exam and a fall risk assessment
Older adults should:
- Sit on the edge of the bed for a few minutes when they first get up in the morning and change position slowly to help avoid dizziness
- Wear supportive, low-heeled, rubber-soled shoes
- Not wear slippers or socks on smooth floors like wood, tile or linoleum
- Wear glasses and hearing aids, if prescribed
- Limit alcohol use
- Be cautious when walking outdoors, especially if it has been raining, snowing or ice is present

Caregivers should:
- Keep items used daily by the older adult (including phones, canes and walkers) easily accessible
- Make sure clutter is removed from living areas and walkways
- Keep chairs and other furniture in the same location
- Make sure all rooms, stairways, and home entries are well and evenly lighted
- Pay attention to any changes, physical or mental, that start after an older adult begins new medication

How to help if a fall occurs
If you find an older adult who has fallen and remains lying on the ground, call 911.

If an older adult falls while you are in their home, do not try to get them up right away. Help them calm down and check for injuries. If they think they can get up, place one chair near their head and another one near their feet (make sure chairs are stable). Help them roll onto one side. Help them get to a kneeling position. Have them place their hands on the chair near their head, place one foot flat on the floor and lean on the seat with their arms to push themselves up. Have them sit in the chair behind them and rest. Continue to check for injuries.

What to do after a fall
If the older adult hit their head or has an injury, they should see their healthcare provider. If they are able to get up and return to their normal activities, they should tell their provider about the fall at their next scheduled visit.

Community Resources for more information
- Pima Council on Aging: (520) 790-7262  https://www.pcoa.org/
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona: (520) 903-9000  http://www.unitedwaytucson.org/

References and Resources
Arizona Fall Prevention Coalition. www.azstopfalls.org