

Take a Stand to Prevent Falls: Falls Prevention Awareness Day

September 23, 2019 is the 10th annual National Falls Prevention Awareness Day and Falls Prevention Week runs through September 29th. Falls are the leading cause of fatal and non-fatal injuries among older adults. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- One in four Americans aged 65+ falls each year.
- Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall; every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.
- Falls result in more than 2.8 million injuries treated in emergency departments annually, including over 800,000 hospitalizations and more than 27,000 deaths.
- In 2015, the total cost of fall injuries was \$50 billion. Medicare and Medicaid shouldered 75% of these costs.
- The financial toll for older adult falls is expected to increase as the population ages and may reach \$67.7 billion by 2020.

We as a nation, state and local partners need to continue to raise awareness about how to prevent fall-related injuries among the elderly. We must collaborate to educate others about the impact of falls, share fall prevention strategies, and advocate for the expansion of evidence-based community fall prevention programs.

This year's theme, *Take a Stand to Prevent Falls*, seeks to unite professionals, older adults, caregivers, and family members to play a part in raising awareness and preventing falls. Click on this link to review the National Council on Aging's (NCOA) evidence-based community [fall prevention programs](#).

Within all of our settings of care, we serve individuals who are at high risk for falls. It is vital that we utilize comprehensive patient risk assessment tools and develop interdisciplinary fall prevention programs. These must include significant patient/family/caregiver education regarding reducing fall risks at home and in the community.

Our zero harm patient safety initiatives are continuing to focus on fall prevention within our facilities. While fall prevention is first and foremost vitally important to the patients, falls in skilled nursing facilities, including rehab are being publicly reported through the CMS Compare websites. Consumers look to these websites to determine quality and if our programs/skilled nursing facilities are where they want to have their loved ones receive care. Successful fall monitoring and proactive fall prevention programs should result in our fall rates always being “better than the national averages” that are published on the Compare sites.

Below are some ideas and resources to help you plan for Fall Prevention Awareness Week.

- Distribute a different flyer each day of the week – each having a fall prevention message with such topics as:
 - [Home Safety](#)
 - [Assistive Devices](#)
 - [Outdoor Falls](#)
 - [Medication Awareness](#)
 - [Vision](#)
 - [Talking with Your Doctor About Fall Risks](#)
 - [Preventing Falls with Pets](#)

The APTA Geriatric Section’s Falls and Balance Special Interest Group (BFSIG) has developed the *National Falls Prevention Day (NFPAD) Event Toolkit* with “purpose of providing physical therapists all of the resources they need to create a falls prevention event in commemoration of NFPAD”. The numerous resources within this kit were designed by clinicians for clinicians “of any skill set or experience level organizing community based fall prevention events”. This toolkit contains a wide variety of educational material for therapist, healthcare providers and community dwelling individuals. The toolkit is free of charge and can be found: <http://geriatricspt.org/?gcyv3m>

Note that you must complete a request to download, if you are an APTA member utilize your ID when signing in. If you are not a member put in 0000 where it requests your ID.