



AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DEPT. OF DISABILITIES, AGING & INDEPENDENT LIVING  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### **Stay Strong and Independent as You Age By Preventing Falls**

BURLINGTON – Each year, many Vermonters experience a fall, and only half will tell their health care provider, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A fall can cause an injury, limit a person’s mobility and independence, and increase social isolation. But although falls are a leading cause of injury and death among people age 65 and older, they are preventable.

Health officials are asking Vermonters to consider: ***Have you fallen in the past year? Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking? Do you worry about falling?*** These screening questions can help determine your risk of falling. During September, you can also look for a free assessment by a physical therapist of your fall risk – including balance, strength and walking – by visiting [fallsfreevermont.org](http://fallsfreevermont.org).

“It’s important to note that falls are not a normal part of aging, but older adults are at higher risk of falling and becoming injured by a fall,” said Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD. “They might have weakening muscles, or be dealing with side effects from prescription medications.”

The fear of falling can also further limit people’s physical activity, making them more likely to fall when they do move around. But there are ways to help prevent falls:

- Talk to your health care provider about any past falls, even if they didn’t lead to an injury. Review your medications and any side effects. Consider Vitamin D supplements.
- Have your vision and hearing checked annually and update eyeglasses and hearing aids as needed.
- Get moving! Try Tai Chi, which has been proven to improve balance and strength. Find free or low-cost classes at [fallsfreevermont.org](http://fallsfreevermont.org).
- Assess your home environment. You can reduce your fall risk by removing trip hazards, improving lighting and installing handrails and grab bars.

Preventing falls is a key part of staying healthy as we all age, said Camille George, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living. “Taking these steps can help us maintain our quality of life as we get older, so we can stay active and independent in our communities,” George said.

For more information about Falls Prevention and Healthy Aging:

- Vermont’s Area Agencies on Aging Help Line: 800-642-5119
- The Vermont Department of Health: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/emergency-preparedness-ems/injury-prevention/prevent-falls>
- Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living’s Adult Services Division <http://asd.vermont.gov/>
- National Council on Aging <http://ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention>

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*About Falls Free Vermont:* Falls Free Vermont is part of the national Falls Free Initiative, led by the National Council on Aging and including 43 states. By providing statewide resources, raising awareness and increasing education and training, the coalition seeks to reduce preventable falls and fall-related injuries and deaths among older Vermonters. The Coalition is co-chaired by the Vermont Department of Health and the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living and includes over 25 organizational members. For more information, visit: [www.fallsfreevermont.org](http://www.fallsfreevermont.org). Use #FPAD2019 to join the conversation on social media.