Healthy LIVING while aging!







September 2021

Healthy aging newsletter provided by UNR Extension

Volume 2, Issue 9

Falls: No laughing matter

By Anne Lindsay, Ph. D., FACSM

September is National Falls Prevention month, and with good reason. Falls are the number one cause of *preventable* injury-related deaths for those 65 and older, according to the Centers for Disease Control, and falls pose a significant threat not only to the health, but also to the independence, of older Americans. In 2018, one out of three older adults sustained at least one fall.

The number of older adults who died from falls, 32,000 or 88 each day, is expected to nearly double by 2030 (59,000 or 162 per day) as America's baby boomer population ages. Over 10,000 people in the United States turn 65 every day. Falls are predicted to increase from 36 million to 52 million annually. The current estimated medical cost of falls to our health care system is \$50 billion a year.

Falls often result in traumatic brain injuries or hip fractures and vary in severity. A mild fall can affect mobility and activities of daily living (ADLs). Even without injury, older adults become afraid of falling, which increases their risk further and causes them to cut down on their everyday activities. Decreased activity makes the muscles weaker and increases the risk of falling (again).

While falling is *not* uncommon, it is also *not* a normal part of aging. Falls can be prevented. Here are some suggestions you might consider doing this month to decrease the chances of you or your loved ones being impacted by a fall:

Anne Lindsay is professor and exercise physiology specialist at <u>University of Nevada</u>, <u>Reno Extension</u>, a unit of the University's <u>College of Agriculture</u>, <u>Biotechnology & Natural Resources</u> and a fellow of the American College of Sports Medicine.

- Talk about it. Talk openly with your family and your health care provider. Only 37% of older adults ask their health care provider about falls, yet these professionals are very skilled at helping to assess fall risk and discuss why that risk may be increasing. More than 90% of older adults see a doctor at least once a year, so that regular office visit is a good time to discuss if you have fallen within the past year, feel unsteady when walking or worry about falling.
- Take the Stay Independent Questionnaire. Before you go to the doctor, complete the CDC's Stay Independent Questionnaire (link below). Answer each of the 12 questions and total your score. Take the results to your next medical appointment so your healthcare provider can help create a personalized fall prevention plan if needed. https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/pdf/STEADI-Brochure-StayIndependent-508.pdf.
- Have your eyes, ears and feet checked.

 Conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts limit vision and increase chances of falling. Hearing loss can result in balance issues, causing you to be unstable. Foot conditions and improper footwear can also contribute to falls. (Continued on back)

For more information about Healthy Aging education or resources, please visit our website: extension.unr.edu and search "Healthy Aging" or contact Macy at 702-257-5592.

Falls: No laughing matter (continued)

• Keep an updated list of all your medications and have it reviewed periodically. Four out of five older adults take at least one prescription medication each day, and more than one-third take five or more daily. While medications are taken to improve sleep, blood pressure, mental health or chronic pain, the side effects from these can result in a fall. Medications often change the way you feel or think, and each time your doctor prescribes a new medication it may increase your risk of falling. As you get older, not only do medications change, but also medicines change the way they affect your body (similar to food and drinks). Look for changes in vision, concentration, muscle strength, balance, reaction time, alertness, fainting, sleepiness, or blood pressure. Ask your provider about taking vitamin D supplements to improve bone, muscle and nerve health.

This article was originally published in the University of Nevada Reno, Nevada Today NSights on Sept. 14, 2020.

If you are at low risk for falls and want to decrease your risk of falling later in life, try simple chair exercises at home (exercise link provided). This will strengthen your legs and buttocks through repeated standing and sitting. Activities such as these may delay or reverse loss of independence, allowing you to continue your activities of daily living (ADLs).

https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/pdf/STEADI-Brochure-ChairRiseEx.

Make your home safer:

- Minimize clutter and tripping hazards from stairs and places where you walk.
- Remove small rugs or use double-sided tape to secure.
- Keep items you use often within reach to reduce the need for stepping stools.
- Place grab bars inside and outside of the tub, shower, or toilet area; use non-slip mats in bathrooms.
- Have handrails and lights installed on all staircases.
- Improve lighting and replace broken/burned out bulbs.

 Check out: cdc.gov/STEADI-Brochure-CheckForSafety-508.pdf.

Exercise to improve your balance, center of gravity and strength.

The 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans Scientific Report provides strong evidence that physical activity reduces the risk of fall-related injuries in older adults by 32 to 40%, and that using various modes or combinations of physical activity provides the most benefits. Some examples of recommended activities are:

- ✓ resistance or muscle strength training,
- ✓ cardio-endurance or aerobic activities, such as walking or dancing,
- ✓ balance activities Tai Chi, Pilates, or Yoga.

Falls Prevention Week is Sept. 20-24, 2021. Help us raise awareness by sharing this newsletter. Remember, falls ARE preventable and NOT a normal part of aging.

Bow Tie Pasta with Zucchini Sauce

Ingredients:

2 cups whole wheat bow tie pasta, cooked

1 small clove garlic, peeled and minced

2 medium zucchini, peeled and grated

1 Tablespoon canola oil

½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

¼ teaspoon salt and a pinch of black pepper

For nutrition information, please search <u>Bow Tie Pasta</u> at CookingMatters.org/recipes.



Directions: Measure 2 cups grated zucchini. In large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add zucchini and minced garlic. Cook until mixture softens and zucchini yields some liquid, about 5-minutes. Drain pasta, reserving ½ cup cooking liquid. Add 1-2 teaspoons cooking liquid to zucchini mixture. Add drained pasta. Stir, coating pasta evenly with sauce. Add more pasta water as needed. Transfer pasta to large bowl for serving. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan. Season with salt and pepper. Toss to combine. (Serves 6, 2/3 cup per serving)

An EEO/AA institution. This material was funded, in part, by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), an equal opportunity provider.