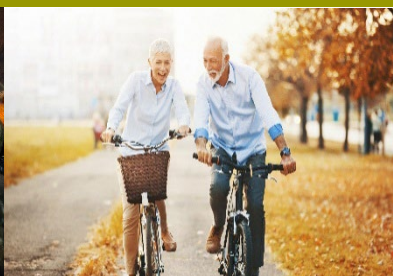


Healthy LIVING while aging!



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Falls: No laughing matter

by Anne Lindsay, Ph. D., FACSM

September is National Falls Prevention Month — and for good reason. Falls remain the leading cause of injury and injury-related death among adults age 65 and older. Today, about **1 in 4 older adults** reports a fall each year in the United States, and millions more go unreported. As the population ages, the number of falls — and related medical costs — continues to rise, with billions spent annually on treatment and recovery.

Falls can lead to serious injuries such as hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries. Even when no injury occurs, the fear of falling can cause older adults to limit activity. Over time, reduced movement leads to weaker muscles and poorer balance — ironically increasing the risk of falling.

The good news? **Falls are not a normal part of aging — and many are preventable.**

Take steps this month to reduce your risk:

Start the conversation.

Talk with your healthcare provider about falls. Share if you've fallen in the past year, feel unsteady or worry about falling. Many providers can assess your risk and help create a prevention plan.

Check your vision, hearing and feet.

Changes in eyesight, hearing or foot health can affect balance and coordination. Regular exams and proper footwear can make a big difference.

Review your medications.

Many older adults take multiple medications, which can increase fall risk due to side effects like dizziness or drowsiness. Ask your provider or pharmacist to review your medications regularly.

Annie Lindsay is a professor and exercise physiology specialist for Extension under the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology & Natural Resources.



Stay active.

Strength and balance exercises — like walking, tai chi or chair exercises — help maintain mobility and reduce fall risk.

Make your home safer

Small changes can greatly reduce fall risk:

- Clear clutter and keep walkways and stairs free of hazards
- Remove loose rugs or secure them with non-slip backing
- Keep frequently used items within easy reach
- Install grab bars in bathrooms and use non-slip mats
- Add handrails and improve lighting throughout the home

For more tips, the CDC STEADI Initiative offers simple checklists and tools.

Stay strong and steady

Regular physical activity improves strength, balance and coordination — all key to preventing falls. Yet only about one in four older adults meets recommended activity guidelines. Research shows exercise can reduce fall-related injuries by up to 30–40%. Try a mix of:

- Strength training (e.g., chair stands)
- Walking or light aerobic activity

Bottom line:

A simple fall can have lasting consequences—but small steps can make a big difference. Staying proactive helps protect your health, confidence, and independence.

Please visit extension.unr.edu/Healthy-Aging to enjoy our accessible, online newsletter and discover additional Healthy Aging education and resources. Or email HealthyAging@unr.edu.

4 STEPS TO FOOD SAFETY



Fall is a time when friends and family gather to celebrate a variety of holidays together, and the center of the action is usually the kitchen. With so many moving parts, it is key that the preparation and cooking areas get fully cleaned and sanitized to avoid the spread of bacteria that causes foodborne illness. You can't see, smell or taste germs that can cause foodborne illness. Wash hands and surfaces often.

Keep these core food safety practices, offered by USDA, in mind:

- **Clean** — Hands should be washed for 20 seconds with clean water and soap. If no running water is available, use hand sanitizer or moist towelettes that contain at least 60% alcohol. You need to wash your hands before, during and after you start any cooking. The steps for proper handwashing are to wet hands, lather with soap, scrub for 20 seconds (the equivalent to singing the “happy birthday” song twice), rinse and air dry or dry using single-use paper towels.
- **Separate** — Separate raw meats from other foods to avoid cross-contamination of harmful bacteria. When you're shopping at the grocery store, keep raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood in separate plastic bags to prevent their juices from dripping onto other foods. Use different cutting boards when preparing raw meat and poultry from other foods. Use specific utensils and platters when placing raw food on the grill or in the smoker and removing the cooked foods.
Don't wash chicken, other poultry products or meats. Many people who wash or rinse meat and poultry do so out of habit or because it's how they learned to cook. USDA research found that washing or rinsing these items greatly increases the spread of germs by splashing bacteria onto kitchen surfaces and other food items. Poultry may have a coating of water and protein: this gets cooked off or you can remove it with a clean paper towel.
- **Cook** — Cook food to the [safe minimum internal temperature](#) as measured with a food thermometer. Using a food thermometer is the only way to confirm that food is thoroughly cooked and has reached a temperature that will destroy harmful germs. Burgers and other thin foods, such as sausages and boneless chicken thighs, should have the thermometer inserted through the side and into the center to get the most accurate thermometer reading. Be careful to avoid touching any bones, which can alter the reading.
- **Chill** — Cold foods can be nestled in a bed of ice and hot foods can be kept hot by placing them on a grill on low, in heated chafing dishes or in a slow cooker. Don't leave food sitting out at room temperature for more than two hours. Refrigerate food promptly within the two-hour timeframe, or one hour if the temperature is over 90 F.

Keeping your kitchen clean and sanitized will reduce the risk of contracting foodborne illness so your holidays won't lead to a sick day. Following USDA guidance on The Four Steps to Food Safety can keep your family and friends safe from contracting foodborne illness. For more information about food safety, contact the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854) or visit the USDA website <https://www.usda.gov/>.