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Falls are serious, preventable; older Alaskans can take simple steps that work

Senior Fall Prevention Week shares proactive tips to protect health, independence

ANCHORAGE — Alaskans value their independence, and that doesn't change with age. During Senior Fall Prevention week, Sept. 18–24, 2011, the Alaska Senior Fall Prevention Coalition is spreading the message statewide that it's never too early or too late to take simple steps to prevent falls and build healthy habits.

Falls are the No. 1 cause of injury to Alaskans age 65 and older. When older Alaskans prevent falls they get a big payoff in terms of protecting their health and independence. Injuries from falling are often serious, including brain trauma and hip fractures, and require time in hospitals and nursing homes. To be safe:

- Exercise regularly to maintain or build balance, strength and flexibility.
- Use a checklist in and around your home to identify tripping hazards you can remove, such as throw rugs, and safety changes you can make, such as better lighting and hand rails.
- Review all your medications with a pharmacist or medical provider each year to check for possible interactions that can make you prone to falling.
- Get eye exams every year.
- Wear non-slip shoes and consider a cane or other walking aid.
- Wear a helmet while biking or doing other activities with fall potential.

Communities can do their part by keeping sidewalks clear, treating ice and posting signs to warn passersby away from slippery or icy areas.

For more information, including a home safety checklist, visit www.alaskaaging.org/falls or contact Nancy Jamieson, 907-465-1605, nancy.jamieson@alaska.gov. Find a video on wearing your helmet at <http://tinyurl.com/3dfuyqd>.

Coalition partners are Alaska Department of Health & Social Services divisions of Public Health and Senior & Disabilities Services, Alaska Commission on Aging, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Brain Injury Prevention, AGENET, AARP-Alaska and Alaska Pharmacist's Association.

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