



Public Health

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEADLINE: Falls Prevention Awareness Day

LEWISTON, IDAHO – Public Health – Idaho North Central District would like you to join in recognizing **Falls Prevention Awareness Day** on the first day of fall, September 23, 2011. The first day of fall has been chosen to raise awareness among older persons and their families about the seriousness of falls and ways to reduce fall risk to stay active and independent.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries for Americans 65 and older. More than 18,000 older Americans die every year because of a fall, and the rate has risen dramatically over the last 10 years. The total cost of fall injuries for older Americans was \$19 billion in 2000. By 2020, the annual direct and indirect cost of fall injuries is expected to reach \$54.9 billion.

“When older adults fall, it often leads to a loss of independence, reduced mobility, and earlier admission to a nursing home,” said Deb Merica, RN, BSN, Fit and Fall Proof™ Coordinator for Public Health. “But the good news is, through appropriate risk management – falls are preventable.”

Studies show that a combination of interventions can significantly reduce falls in the older adult population. Experts recommend a physical activity regimen with balance, strength training, and flexibility components; consulting with a health professional about getting a fall risk assessment; having medications reviewed periodically; getting eyes checked annually; and making sure the home environment is safe and supportive.

Public Health has teamed up with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to address this issue by offering the Fit and Fall Proof™ exercise program. Fit and Fall Proof™ is a free/low-cost exercise program for adults aged 65 and older. Adults in this age group are at the highest risk for injury or death due to accidental falls. Exercise sessions are taught by trained volunteers, meeting up to three times per week. They are designed to improve strength, balance, flexibility and mobility while decreasing one’s risk of falling. In addition to the exercise benefits, older adults receive the added benefit of fostering close relationships with class mates.

For further information about the Fit and Fall Proof™ activities in your area, please visit www.idahopublichealth.com or call Public Health – Idaho North Central District at (208) 799-3100.