



# 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 22, 2013. 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 age 65 and older. In Idaho, up to 30% of community dwelling adults fall each year; one-half to two-thirds of the falls occur around the home. In 2011, partial reporting from ambulance runs revealed 7,036 fall-related calls.

“When older adults fall, it often leads to a loss of independence, reduced mobility, and earlier admission to a nursing home”, said Deb Merica, Fit and Fall Proof™ Coordinator for Public Health – Idaho North Central District. “A majority of falls occur during routine activities. Falls are not usually caused by a single issue. It is often a combination of things together – loss of muscle strength and balance, combinations of medications, and tripping hazards. The good news is, through appropriate risk management – falls are largely preventable.”

Studies show that a combination of interventions can significantly reduce falls. 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. Remove loose rugs and cords; make sure stairwells are well-lit and have sturdy railings; fix broken or uneven steps; pick up clutter; make sure frequently household used items are on easy to reach shelves.

Public Health teamed up with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to offer the Fit and Fall Proof™ - a free/low-cost exercise program for adults. Exercise sessions are taught by trained volunteers, meeting two to three times per week. The exercises are designed to improve strength, balance, flexibility and mobility while decreasing one’s risk of falling.

For further information about home fall prevention tips and the Fit and Fall Proof™ exercise program, please visit [www.idahopublichealth.com](http://www.idahopublichealth.com) or call Public Health – Idaho North Central District at (208) 799-3100.