

News Column – Donna Krug, District Director and Family & Consumer Sciences Agent,
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Fall Prevention Awareness Week is Now

Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths, unintentional injuries, and hospital admissions for trauma. Falls can take a serious toll on older adults' quality of life and independence. To recognize this critical issue, since 2008, the first week of Fall each year is designated as Fall Prevention Awareness Week.

At the heart of this initiative is the message that falls are preventable. There are several reminders related to home modifications that can make your home safer, reducing your chances of falling.

1. Keep pathways clear – Keep stairs and walkways clear by removing objects that you could trip over. Add storage for things that are usually on the floor, such as shoes or papers.
2. Be aware of uneven surfaces – Look out for changes in the level of flooring, such as in doorways or in between carpeting and tile. Remove throw rugs or use a rug gripper underneath to secure them to the floor. If you can move a rug easily with your foot, you could slip on it.
3. Keep frequently used items close by – Reaching up high or bending down low can cause you to lose balance. For example – in the kitchen, make sure that cooking supplies and other items that you use often are easy to reach.
4. Light your way – Install bright lights, have switches at both ends of stairways, and use night lights to light the path from your bedroom to bathroom. Light switches that glow are easier to see in the dark.
5. Add supports in the bathroom – Bathrooms can be dangerous, especially when things are wet. Put grab bars near the toilet and in the shower. Non-skid strips in the bathtub can keep you from slipping.
6. Stay safe on the stairs – Consider installing handrails on both sides of the stairs. If you already have handrails, be sure you use them. Check that they are properly installed and not loose.

As your abilities change over the years, your home should provide you and your loved ones with the support you need to do your daily activities and the things that you enjoy.

One of the workshops that I enjoy teaching, is titled Stay Strong, Stay Healthy. This research based program is a set of 8 upper and lower body exercises that focus on strength, flexibility and balance. The 8-week class will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Great Bend, January 14th through March 19th. There is a \$20 registration fee. You can register by calling my office at: (620)793-1910. I'm planning to offer a 10:00 class and also an 11:00 class. Class size is limited so call early to reserve your spot.

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