



## Staying On Your Feet – Taking Steps to Prevent Falls for Older Adults

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One in three older adults over 65 will fall this year. Health Canada (2002) stated that falls are the leading cause of injury and pain. Falls have a huge impact on people, families and the healthcare system. Preventing falls is everyone's responsibility. People do not just fall because of getting older - there are many other contributing factors. It is important that everyone knows their own risks and what they can do to reduce or eliminate them.

The Saskatoon Health Region has recently made preventing falls in seniors one of their priority areas and as a result, there have been a number of new fall prevention initiatives in the Saskatoon Health Region developed. The goals of these initiatives are to reduce the number of falls and the injuries from those falls while working towards a coordinated falls prevention approach. To provide the leadership and coordination that is needed, Daphne Kemp, Fall Prevention Coordinator was hired in February 2012.

The Saskatoon Health Region through Seniors' Health and Continuing Care is excited to partner with SCOA in their initiatives to prevent falls in the community through education and awareness. Our shared goal is to create safer environments that will keep older adults as independent, healthy and active at home for as long as possible.

A few of the promising initiatives are: the development of a checklist that will help a person identify their own personal fall risk factors and their degree of fall risk. Once completed, they would take this checklist to a healthcare provider for assistance in addressing their fall risk factors with the goal of reducing or minimizing those that they can. This checklist will be available in the fall of 2012 through both the Saskatoon Health Region and SCOA. Some of the questions on this checklist are: have you had a fall in the past 12 months, are you experiencing changes to your balance, are you active 30 minutes/day, Do you wear nonslip footwear. Questions

regarding medications being taken, vision, home environment that may be a hazard, problems with memory or concentration, and nutrition and hydration. A pamphlet on the importance of Vitamin D and Calcium in the prevention of falls will be available soon at the SCOA resource center and a Positive Aging calendar should be ready by the end of 2012 (based on funding).

A way that you can reduce your risk of falling is to increase your physical activity levels and include strength and balance exercises. The **Staying on Your Feet** program is a fall prevention education and balance exercise program that provides participants with fall prevention education and balance exercises designed specifically for improving balance which in turn can lead to less falls. The majority of the **Forever...in motion** leaders have also taken training on how to offer a safe physical activity program for older adults that includes fall prevention education and an introduction to balance exercises. These programs are supported by Recreation and Physical Therapists from the Saskatoon Health Region.

The Saskatoon Health Region will continue their work in long term care, acute care and in the community to address the complex factors that contribute to falls. Special considerations need to be taken in each of the areas across the health region. Currently the health region is implementing numerous strategies and evaluating these programs to see what more needs to be done. Not all falls can be prevented; however steps can be taken to reduce injury.

Find out what you can do to help if you or someone you know is in the hospital, requires long term care or is experiencing falls while still living in their own home. For more information, please contact Daphne Kemp @ 655- 8664 or Janet Barnes@655-7874.