

Injury Prevention Brief

PREVENTING FALLS

Every week, 9 older adults die and 124 are hospitalized from a fall-related injury in Oklahoma.



ENVIRONMENT

Most falls happen in homes and are entirely preventable.

- All rooms in homes should be well-lit. Put in brighter light bulbs, and install night lights.
- Clutter and tripping hazards cause falls. Make sure all pathways are clear and clean.
- Stairwells should be well-lit, clear of objects and have handrails on both sides.
- Put grab bars next to and inside the tub and next to the toilet. Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.



HEALTH

Older adults with hip or bone weakness, arthritis, osteoporosis and blood pressure fluctuation are more prone to falls.

- Ask your doctor to assess your risk of falling.
- Share your history of recent falls.
- Get your vision and hearing checked annually.



MEDICATION

Many medications have side effects that can affect an older adult's coordination and balance or cause dizziness, confusion or sleepiness.

- Ask a doctor or pharmacist to review all medications, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and minerals.
- Make sure medications are properly labeled and there are clear instructions for usage.



EXERCISE

Oftentimes, older adults fear that exercise may lead to a fall, but regular physical activity is the first line of defense against falls and fractures.

- Many communities offer group exercise classes, such as water aerobics and Tai Chi, which use slow, flowing movements to help relax and coordinate the mind and body.
- Mild weight-bearing exercise, like walking or climbing stairs, helps slow bone loss from osteoporosis and increase muscle strength.

Did You Know?

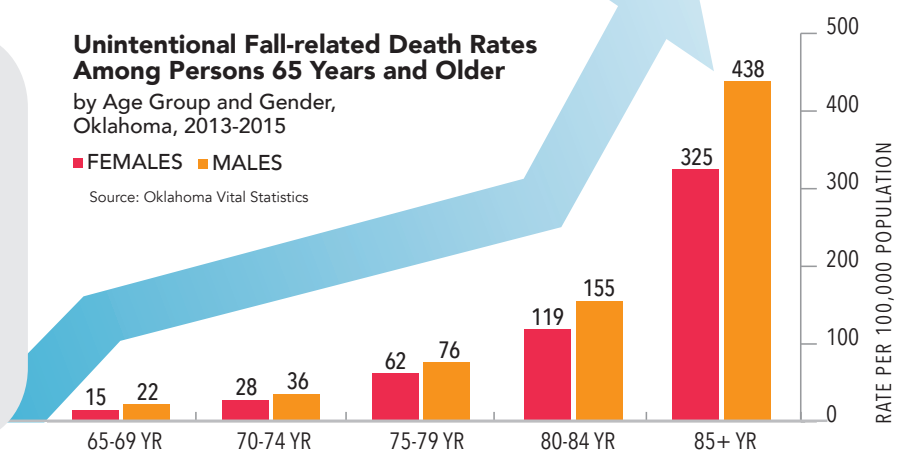
Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities, leading to reduced mobility and loss of physical fitness, which in turn increases their actual risk of falling.

Unintentional Fall-related Death Rates Among Persons 65 Years and Older

by Age Group and Gender, Oklahoma, 2013-2015

■ FEMALES ■ MALES

Source: Oklahoma Vital Statistics



Moving for Better Balance in Oklahoma

TAI CHI

Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance is an evidence-based fall prevention program that was designed to be used in community-based organizations. Accumulating evidence suggests that Tai Chi eight-form exercises are an effective means of improving balance, functional limitations, and muscle strength, which reduces the risk of falling. Tai Chi is a low-impact dance-like exercise that can be modified to meet the individual participant's needs and can be done in almost any location. It also helps to build confidence from the fear of falling, which is commonly found in older adults.



BENEFITS OF TAI CHI

- **Improves Balance and Posture**
- **Improves Functional Limitations**
- **Strengthens Muscles**
- **Builds Confidence from the Fear of Falling**
- **Improves Mental and Physical Health**
(Positive attitudes, self-esteem and well-being)
- **Improves Musculoskeletal Conditions**
(Reduction of arthritic symptoms; increases in flexibility and mobility)
- **Improves Cardiovascular Functions**
- **Reduces Hypertension**
- **Improves the Quality of Sleep**
- **Enhances Stamina**
- **Increases Energy**

RESOURCES

Oklahoma seniors are invited to join a local *Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance* class. To receive more information on classes and how to prevent falls, contact the OSDH Injury Prevention Service at (405) 271-3430 or visit falls.health.ok.gov.

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