Stepping On Falls Prevention Program FACT SHEET

Stepping On is a program that empowers older adults to carry out health behaviors that reduce the risks of falls. It is a community-based workshop offered once a week for seven weeks using adult education and self-efficacy principles. In a small-group setting, older adults learn balance exercises and develop specific knowledge and skills to prevent falls. Older adults who should attend are those who: a) are at risk of falling, b) have a fear of falling, or c) who have fallen one or more times. Workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, one who is a professional who works with older adults, and one an older adult who meets the criteria for the class.

Subjects covered include:
Improving balance and strength, home modifications, community safety, vision, medication review, safe footwear, sleep.

It is the process in which the program is taught that makes it effective. Classes are highly participative; mutual support and success build the participants' confidence in their ability to manage their health behaviors to reduce the risk of falls and to maintain active and fulfilling lives.

Does Stepping On replace existing programs and treatments? The Stepping On Program will not conflict with existing programs or treatments.

How was Stepping On developed?
The program is the work of Dr. Lindy Clemson, a Ph.D. occupational therapist from Australia.

How was Stepping On evaluated and what were the results?
The program was evaluated and the results published in the September 2004 issue of the Journal of American Geriatrics Society. At the end of the study, Dr. Clemson found that those completing Stepping On experienced a 31% reduction in falls. This demonstrated that the program was effective in preventing falls in community-residing older adults.

The NDSU Extension Service is partnering with the ND Department of Health to provide Class Leader training in North Dakota. There are currently 73 certified Class Leaders located in 29 counties. For information on scheduled workshops or a map of counties with certified Class Leaders, go to: https://www.ndhealth.gov/injury/SteppingOn.htm

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Why preventing falls is so important
Falls are the leading cause of injury and death among those age 65 and older.

In 2013, 2.5 million nonfatal falls among older adults were treated in emergency departments and more than 734,000 of these patients were hospitalized. In 2013, the direct medical costs of falls, adjusted for inflation, were $34 billion.

Twenty to thirty percent of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as lacerations, hip fractures or head traumas. Even if no injuries occur after a fall, many people develop a fear of falling, which in turn often causes them to limit their activities. This can result in reduced mobility and loss of physical conditioning, increasing their risk of falling.

In North Dakota, falls remain the third leading cause of injury-related fatalities. A total of 558 North Dakota residents died due to falls from 2009 through 2014. Eighty-nine percent of residents that died from falls during this timeframe were 65 years or older.