**Debunking the Myths of Older Adult Falls**

Many people think falls are a normal part of aging. The truth is, they're not. Most falls can be prevented—and you have the power to reduce your risk.

​​​​​​​Exercising, managing your medications, having your vision checked, and making your living environment safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall.

To promote greater awareness and understanding here are 10 common myths—and the reality—about older adult falls.

**Myth 1:** Falling happens to other people, not to me.

*Reality:* Many people think, "It won't happen to me." But the truth is that 1 in 4 older adults fall every year in the U.S.

Most Seniors do not realize how bad their balance has gotten until they suffer an unintended fall

**Myth 2:** Falling is something normal that happens as you get older.

*Reality:* Falling is not a normal part of aging. Strength and balance exercises, managing your medications, having your vision checked and making your living environment safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall.

Falling is NOT a natural part of aging and most falls can be prevented.

**Myth 3:** If I limit my activity, I won't fall.

*Reality:* Some people believe that the best way to prevent falls is to stay at home and limit activity. Not true. Performing physical activities will actually help you stay independent, as your strength and range of motion benefit from remaining active. Social activities are also good for your overall health.

Quite the opposite, you can’t withdraw and expect to avoid falls. Less activity leads to less movement and less socialization.

**Myth 4:** As long as I stay at home, I can avoid falling.

*Reality:* Over half of all falls take place at home. Inspect your home for fall risks. Fix simple but serious hazards such as clutter, throw rugs, and poor lighting. Make simple home modifications, such as adding grab bars in the bathroom, a second handrail on stairs, and non-slip paint on outdoor steps.

Most falls occur at home. And of those falls, the majority occur in the bathroom. Mr. Wolfe story (toilet paper roll holder to push off the toilet.)

**Myth 5:** Muscle strength and flexibility can't be regained.

*Reality:* While we do lose muscle as we age, exercise can partially restore strength and flexibility. It’s never too late to start an exercise program. Even if you've been a "couch potato" your whole life, becoming active now will benefit you in many ways—including protection from falls.

Although the ability to build lean muscle tissue decreases as we age, our brains are still malleable and can learn a new “balance language”

**Myth 6:** Taking medication doesn't increase my risk of falling.

*Reality:* Taking any medication may increase your risk of falling. Medications affect people in many different ways and can sometimes make you dizzy or sleepy. Be careful when starting a new medication. Talk to your health care provider about potential side effects or interactions of your medications.

Polypharmacy affects approximately 57% of Seniors

SOURCE: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4418141/>

**Myth 7:** I don't need to get my vision checked every year.

*Reality:* Vision is another key risk factor for falls. Aging is associated with some forms of vision loss that increase risk of falling and injury. People with vision problems are more than twice as likely to fall as those without visual impairment. Have your eyes checked at least once a year and update your eyeglasses. For those with low vision there are programs and assistive devices that can help. Ask your optometrist for a referral.

The importance of the vestibular system

**Myth 8:** Using a walker or cane will make me more dependent.

Reality: Walking aids are very important in helping many older adults maintain or improve their mobility. However, make sure you use these devices safely. Have a physical therapist fit the walker or cane to you and instruct you in its safe use.

Aids prevent falls but want to continue to work on their balance

**Myth 9:** I don’t need to talk to family members or my health care provider if I’m concerned about my risk of falling. I don’t want to alarm them, and I want to keep my independence.

*Reality:* Fall prevention is a team effort. Bring it up with your doctor, family, and anyone else who is in a position to help. They want to help you maintain your mobility and reduce your risk of falling.

What do you do if you fall? You need to tell someone.

**Myth 10:** I don't need to talk to my parent, spouse, or other older adult if I’m concerned about their risk of falling. It will hurt their feelings, and it's none of my business.

*Reality:* Let them know about your concerns and offer support to help them maintain the highest degree of independence possible. There are many things you can do, including removing hazards in the home, installing safety features like grab bars or walk-in bathtubs, finding a fall prevention program in the community, or setting up a vision exam.

This is absolutely the worst thing you can do! Talk to them and show them the benefits of taking Balance University.

SOURCE: Debunking the Myths of Older Adult Falls (National Council on Aging)

(<https://www.ncoa.org/article/debunking-the-myths-of-older-adult-falls>)