



# Staying Steady & Strong

## An Update on Falls Prevention Efforts in Vermont

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# What is the problem?

## Falls Facts in Vermont

- Vermont ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation for our high rate of falls.
- 1 in 3 older Vermonters age 65+ reports falling in the last 12 months (BRFSS).
- Falls are and have been the leading cause of injury and death among older Vermonters.
- An average hospital cost for a fall injury is \$30,000.
- Falls among older adults cost the U.S. health care system \$34 billion in direct medical costs.

Learn more facts on falls from the [Department of Health](#).

# What is the solution?

## Falls Prevention Work in Vermont

### Strategic Areas of Focus:

- Increasing Education & Awareness
- Improving Screening & Assessment
- Expansion of Programs & Interventions

### Collaboration is Key: Local, Regional, National

- Falls Free Vermont Coalition
- New England Evidence-Based Collaborative
- NCOA Falls Prevention Collaborative





# Falls Prevention: The Basic Message

- Move your body.
- Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Get your eyes and ears checked regularly.
- Review your medications for side effects.
- Make your home safe.
- Talk to your family.
- Learn more at [fallsfreevermont.org](https://fallsfreevermont.org)

# Reframing Falls Prevention



Tai Chi at Long Wind Farm

- We all want to stay strong and independent as we age. We don't have to fall or get hurt as we get older. We don't have to be afraid of falling.
- The causes of falls are complex, but Vermonters are problem solvers. We know there are proven preventions, and we can work together to make them happen across our state.
- Let us empower each other to stay healthy and strong as we get older, because we all have more to contribute – more skill, wisdom and experience.
- Let us create a Vermont community that fosters health and well-being and prevents falls for all of us, no matter our age.

# Programs/Interventions Proven to Reduce Falls & Promote Health

[CDC STEADI](#): Screening, Assessment, Intervention

Evidence-based Falls Prevention Programs Currently Offered in Vermont:

- Tai Chi for Arthritis / Tai Chi for Falls Prevention
- Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program (similar to “Bone Builders”)
- A Matter of Balance
- Enhance Fitness

Evidence-based Falls Prevention Programs being explored in Vermont:

- CAPABLE
- Otago

More about these and other evidenced-based programs here:

<https://www.ncoa.org/center-for-healthy-aging/>

# The Impact of COVID-19

- Loss of in-person group programming at many sites, including “Stay Steady” screenings.
  - Many online programs began with good participation
  - Need to promote self-directed screening such as the [“Falls Free Check Up.”](#)
- PTs reporting patients are weaker from lack of exercise during pandemic spring
  - In-home / self-management programs become more critical to promote
- COVID has framed all older Vermonters as vulnerable, increasing ageism
  - More important than ever to promote healthy aging and social connectedness



[Understanding Ageism and COVID19 Infographic](#)

# Vermont's Work Going Forward

- This is a long-term population health issue that impacts all of us. Because falls are multifactorial, we need a comprehensive and coordinated approach:
  - Across all levels of government, healthcare systems, service providers, and communities;
  - With evidence-based interventions across the lifespan and across the continuum of care that reach people at low, moderate and high risk;
  - And funding structures that support sustainability.



# Vermont's Work Going Forward

## Some Promising Initiatives:

- Northern Vermont University currently conducting study looking [at nutrition and falls risk](#). Focus on research to build the evidence-base.
- New England Evidence-Based Collaborative. Focus on building sustainable falls prevention programming.
- [Older Vermonters Act](#) has passed; includes the development of an Action Plan for Aging Well, work towards making Vermont an Age-Friendly State.



# Thank You!

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<https://asd.vermont.gov/special-projects/falls-prevention-initiative>