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**Vermont is Ready to Stay Steady**  
*Falls Prevention for Healthy Aging*

Waterbury, VT – Of the nearly 1,500 calls in 2015-2016 to Vermont’s Emergency Medical Services to aid in a fall incident, 8 out of 10 involved people who were 65 years of age or older. As part of Falls Prevention Awareness Month, the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, the Health Department and the Falls Free Vermont Coalition are joining forces with the National Council on Aging to encourage older Vermonters to take advantage of no-cost fall risk assessments and a host of fall prevention programs.

Throughout September, Stay Steady Vermont is offering screening events across the state sponsored by the Vermont chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association. These events are free and are open to the public, and offer older Vermonters information about fall risks, how to stay balanced, and individual assessments by physical therapists for leg strength, balance, and walking. Stay Steady Vermont community partners also offer falls prevention exercise classes, such as Tai Chi.

Falls Prevention Awareness Month kicks-off on September 6 at 1:00 p.m. at the [Montpelier Senior Activity Center](#) (58 Barre Street). Participants will learn about healthy aging and falls prevention, see Tai Chi in action and can have an individual risk assessment. Find a Stay Steady event and falls prevention exercise class near you at [fallsfreevermont.org](http://fallsfreevermont.org) or call your local Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-642-5119.

Unintentional falls are responsible for the largest number of injury-related hospitalizations and emergency department visits. In 2014, there were more than 22,000 such injuries, but Monica Caserta Hutt, Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, said the majority of falls can be prevented. “Falls are not an inevitable part of aging,” said Hutt. “We are engaging in a statewide effort to support older Vermonters in making simple changes to stay safe and healthy at home.”

“Older adults can remain independent and healthy by knowing their personal fall risk, and by committing to simple actions like regular exercises and working closely with their doctors,” said Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD. “Nearly 20 percent of Vermonters are age 65 or older, and that number is increasing,” said Dr. Levine. “As we age, we are more likely to be injured in a fall. It’s important that people be aware of what they can do to reduce their risk. Partnership efforts like this will have a positive impact on healthy aging in their community.”

Falls Free Vermont focuses our statewide education efforts in areas that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recognized can significantly reduce falls risk:

- **Speak Up** — Talk openly with your medical provider, family members and friends about falling or a fear of falling.
- **Review Medications** — With your doctor, have your medications reviewed to identify any that cause dizziness. See whether taking vitamin D supplements is right for you to improve your bone, muscle, and nerve health.
- **Keep Moving** — Find activities and exercises that improve strength, mobility, and balance. Consider joining a falls prevention class in your community, such as Tai Chi, Bone Builders or other courses.
- **Check Your Eyes** — Have your vision checked once a year and update your glasses as needed.
- **Make Your Home Safe** — Most falls happen at home. Keep your floors clutter free, remove or secure small rugs, add grab bars to bathrooms, have handrails and lights installed near all staircases, and make sure your home is well-lit. Be careful of pets that get underfoot.

By addressing these areas of prevention, older Vermonters are more likely to live longer, healthier lives.

**For more information about Falls Prevention and Healthy Aging:**

- [www.fallsfreevermont.org](http://www.fallsfreevermont.org)
- Vermont’s Senior Help Line: 800-642-5119
- The Vermont Department of Health  
[healthvermont.gov/emergency-preparedness-ems/injury-prevention/prevent-falls](http://healthvermont.gov/emergency-preparedness-ems/injury-prevention/prevent-falls)
- Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living’s Adult Services Division <http://asd.vermont.gov/>
- National Council on Aging <http://ncoa.org/healthy-aging/falls-prevention>

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**About Falls Free Vermont**

Falls Free Vermont is part of the national [Falls Free Initiative](#), led by the National Council on Aging and including 43 states. By providing statewide resources, raising awareness and increasing education and training, the coalition seeks to reduce preventable falls and fall-related injuries and deaths among older Vermonters. The Coalition is co-chaired by the [Vermont Department of Health](#) and the [Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living](#) and includes over 25 organizational members. For more information, visit: [www.fallsfreevermont.org](http://www.fallsfreevermont.org). Use #FPAD2018 to join the conversation on social media.