

Instructions: Use this guide to make the case for falls prevention and direct people to fallsfreewi.org. You don't have to use all of the points, rather choose the points that make the most sense for your platform, audience and time constraints.

The Falls Situation in Wisconsin:

- Wisconsin has the highest rate of older adult* injury-related deaths due to falls in the United States (CDC)
- More than one in four older adults falls each year (CDC)
- Over 43,000 older adults in Wisconsin went to the emergency department for a fall in 2021 (WI DHS WISH)
- Hospitalizations for older adult falls in Wisconsin cost \$427 million in 2020-2021, up 11% from 2016-2017 (WI DHS WISH)
- Governor Evers recently declared September as Falls Prevention Awareness Month

The Falls Situation Locally:

- **Insert local data** (from local sources and/or <https://fallsfreewi.org/for-professionals/data/>)

Falls Free Wisconsin:

- Falls Free Wisconsin is a new Wisconsin-focused initiative aimed at addressing the falls crisis by providing older adults, their families and caregivers and professionals that work with older adults with information and resources to reduce falls risk.
- Launched by the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) in partnership with the Falls Free Wisconsin Coalition, the Falls Free Wisconsin website (fallsfreewi.org) has tools for older adults and their families to assess their falls risk, learn more about risk factors like medication use, home safety, balance and strength, vision and more.
- The website has videos, interactive quizzes, a virtual home safety challenge, and easy-to-use downloadable and printable materials.
- There are things you can do to prevent falls! Falls Free Wisconsin helps people take control of their safety, address their falls risk factors and stay upright and independent as they age.

+ Topic-Specific Information, If Relevant (See Below!)

Local Falls Prevention Efforts:

- **Insert local programs and initiatives** (information about an upcoming Stepping On workshop, falls prevention event, etc.,)

Closing:

- Falls may be common, but they don't have to be a normal part of aging; you can do something to reduce your risk. For more information go to fallsfreewi.org/[local resource].

Topic-Specific Information:

Assistive Devices:

- Assistive devices are items that you can install or use to help prevent falls.
- Some examples of assistive devices are grab bars, reachers, handrails, canes and walkers, walking sticks, medical alert devices, and smart speakers.
- Consider installing handrails if you don't have them, consult with a professional about installing grab bars, or talk to a physical therapist about using a cane or walker.
- Using assistive devices can help you stay independent and reduce your risk of falling.
- FallsFreeWI.org has more information about assistive devices and ways to use them to prevent falls.

Balance and Strength

- You can prevent falls by improving your balance and increasing your strength.
- Good balance and strength are important for everyday activities and can be improved at any age with regular practice. Balance can be affected by medications or alcohol, inner ear problems, medical conditions, or problems with vision. Strength is important for things like walking up and down stairs, getting up from a chair, and carrying things around the house.
- One way you can improve your balance and strength is by joining an exercise class. This is a great way to stay accountable, meet new people, and have fun!
- You can find even more ways to improve your strength and balance, including exercises you can do in your own home, when you visit FallsFreeWI.org!

Footwear

- Many of us have a favorite pair of worn-out slippers or walk barefoot in our homes, but having support underneath us can make a big difference in our fall risk.
- Wearing unsafe shoes can put you at risk of a fall. Some important features to look for in a safe shoe include:
 - A firm collar to provide stability
 - A bevelled heel to prevent slipping
 - A thin, firmer midsole so you can feel the ground underneath
 - A textured sole to prevent slipping
 - Laces to ensure the shoe holds onto your foot when walking
 - And a firm heel collar to provide stability

- There are even items that you can use during the icy Wisconsin winters to help make your footwear safer such as ice cleats.
- Visit FallsFreeWI.org to learn more about the features of a safe shoe versus an unsafe shoe and how you can reduce your risk of a fall.

Medications & More

- Prescriptions, over the counter medicines, herbal supplements, and other supplements can increase your falls risk.
- Some medications known to increase the risk of falling include sleeping pills, anxiety or depression medications, and medications that can suddenly lower blood pressure.
- It's important to ask your provider or pharmacist to review your prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, and supplements annually to see if you are at risk for a fall.
- FallsFreeWI.org has more information about medications and more to help you prevent falls.

Sight

- As we age, our vision changes. Impaired vision more than doubles the risk of an older adult experiencing a fall.
- You can prevent falls by getting an eye exam at least once a year to identify any potential vision changes or diseases.
- Changes in vision can be hard. You can use sunglasses or a hat to reduce glare and protect your eyes from UV rays in the sun, improve lighting throughout your home, and when walking always ensure that you are aware of your surroundings.
- Visit FallsFreeWI.org to learn more about how sight can impact your falls risk.

Hearing and Ear Health

- As we age, our ears and hearing change. About one-third of older adults may have age-related hearing loss.
- Hearing loss can be caused by several different things, including changes in the structure of our ear as we age, exposure to loud noises over a long period of time, medical conditions, or even medication side effects.
- A few signs of a hearing problem include:
 - Having trouble hearing people on the phone
 - Asking people to repeat what they say frequently
 - When watching television, the volume is so high that others say something about it
- Hearing aids are one solution and now over-the-counter hearing aids are available without a prescription! It is important to talk to your provider about getting a hearing test once a year to detect any changes in hearing.

- Visit FallsFreeWI.org to learn about how hearing loss can increase your risk of falls and what you can do to prevent falls!

Surroundings

- Did you know that most falls happen at home? There are many steps you can take to make your home safer and more accessible to prevent falls.
- Some things you can do to make your home safer include reducing clutter, ensuring there is good lighting that can help you see fall hazards such as a wet floor, avoiding the use of throw rugs if possible, and ensuring that we are aware of where our pets are throughout the house.
- By making items more easily accessible, planning ahead, and not rushing, you can make your home a safer place and reduce your falls risk.
- Visit FallsFreeWI.org to find more resources to help you keep your home safe- like our interactive home safety challenge and printable home safety checklist.

**older adults = 65+*