**451 words, not counting title & highlighted text**

**Steady Steps & Wagging Tails: Stay Balanced and Prevent Falls**

Pets are wonderful companions who help keep us active, but they can also knock us off balance and increase our risk of falls! [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME and] the Falls Free® Wisconsin Coalition, a statewide initiative committed to reducing falls as we age, are highlighting the importance of balance and pet safety tips to help us prevent falls as we age, build confidence and age independently.

Improving your balance and strength can have a noticeable impact on reducing your risk of falls! Balance and strength are important for everyday activities, like walking up and down stairs and getting up from a chair or bed or out of a car and can be improved at any age with regular practice. When you have strong leg and hip muscles and regularly practice balance exercises, you can reduce your risk of falling and suffering a life-changing injury. Consider joining an exercise class or falls prevention program (in-person or online!) to stay accountable, meet new people, and have fun while improving your physical health. [Include local info on where to find exercise classes or health promotion programs or delete].

There may also be other reasons why your balance is affected including medications or alcohol, inner ear problems, medical conditions, or vision problems. If you feel any of these things may be affecting your balance, talk to your healthcare provider for further assessment.

In addition to improving your balance, if you have pets, or regularly visit someone who does, consider these safety tips to reduce your risk of falls:

* Clean up spills around water dishes right away
* Pick up toys frequently, especially in walkways
* Train your pet so they don’t jump or pull
* Make their presence known! Use a bright-colored collar or put a bell or light on their collar
* Keep your pet in a separate area during busy times or if someone comes to visit
* Be aware! Know where your pet is at all times and learn your pet’s behaviors and habits
* Take your time and pay attention to your surroundings

If you have experienced a fall, you’re not alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 1 in 4 older adults (ages 65+) have a fall each year. The good news is that while falls are common, they don’t have to be a normal part of aging! The Falls Free Wisconsin Coalition’s interactive website, [**FallsFreeWI.org**](https://wihealthyaging.sharepoint.com/sites/WIHA/Partners/Coalition%20-%20Falls%20Prevention/1.%20Awareness%20Workgroup/2025/February%20Media%20Campaign/FallsFreeWI.org), has examples of simple balance and strength exercises that can be practiced at home, information about medications, home safety, vision, footwear, and more so you can take action to stay balanced and prevent falls.

We’re all aging. From older adults to their families or caregivers, and everyone in between, [**FallsFreeWI.org**](https://wihealthyaging.sharepoint.com/sites/WIHA/Partners/Coalition%20-%20Falls%20Prevention/1.%20Awareness%20Workgroup/2024/2024%20FPAM/FallsFreeWI.org) is your one-stop-shop to age with confidence and prevent falls. [YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME] encourages you to visit [**FallsFreeWI.org**](http://fallsfreewi.org/) today and take action to stay safe and independent!

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