**Instructions:** Use this guide to spark conversations that keep us all safer as we age. It’s packed with key messages about why preventing falls matters — and how to take simple steps toward staying strong, steady, and independent. No need to cover it all! Choose the points that best fit your audience, platform, and timeframe. Every message makes a difference!

1. **About Falls Free Wisconsin:**
* Falls may be common — but they’re not inevitable. That’s the message behind Falls Free Wisconsin, a statewide initiative helping older adults, families, caregivers, and professionals take simple, effective steps to stay safe, steady, and independent as we age.
* Launched by the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA) in partnership with the Falls Free Wisconsin Coalition, <FallsFreeWI.org> is your go-to hub for fall prevention resources tailored to Wisconsin communities.
* Explore tools to assess your falls risk, discover how factors like medications, vision, balance, and home safety play a role — and most importantly, learn what you can do about it.
* The site features engaging videos, interactive quizzes, a virtual home safety challenge, and a library of printable resources that make it easy to take action.
* Because staying on your feet isn’t just about personal safety — it’s about preserving your independence, confidence, and quality of life. And here’s the good news: we all have a role to play. Let’s work together to make falls prevention a team effort!
1. **+ Topic-Specific Information, If Relevant (See Below!)**
2. **Local Falls Prevention Efforts:**
* Insert local programs and initiatives (information about an upcoming Stepping On workshop, falls prevention event, balance and strength exercise classes, etc.,)
1. **The Falls Situation in Wisconsin:**
* More than one in four older adults falls each year. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
* Almost 52,000 older adults in Wisconsin went to the emergency department for a fall in 2023. (WI DHS WISH)
* Over 11,500 older Wisconsinites were hospitalized due to a fall in 2023. The average charge per hospitalization due to a fall is $62,218. Therefore, hospital charges due to falls totaled over $716,379,990 [over seven hundred sixteen million dollars], with Medicare covering 90% of those charges. (WI DHS WISH)
* Governor Evers recently declared September as Falls Prevention Awareness Month.
1. **The Falls Situation Locally:**
* Insert local data (from local sources and/or <https://fallsfreewi.org/for-professionals/data>/)
1. **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](http://fallsfreewi.org)/[local resource].

**+ Topic-Specific Information:**

**Assistive Devices:**

* Assistive devices are everyday tools that can help you move more safely and confidently — and reduce your risk of falling.
* Think grab bars, handrails, reachers, canes, walkers, walking sticks, medical alert systems, and even smart speakers.
* Don’t have handrails? Consider installing them. Need extra support walking? A physical therapist can help you find the right cane or walker. Small changes like these can make a big difference.
* Using assistive devices isn’t a sign of weakness — it’s a smart way to stay safe, independent, and active.
* Learn more about how assistive devices can support your safety and independence at FallsFreeWI.org.

**Balance and Strength**

* You can lower your risk of falling by building your balance and strength — and the best part? It’s never too late to start.
* Strength helps with everyday things like climbing stairs, standing up from a chair, or carrying groceries.
* Balance keeps you steady and can be affected by things like medications, inner ear issues, medical conditions, or vision changes and improved by practicing some simple exercises.
* One great way to boost both? Join an exercise class! You'll stay motivated, meet new people, and have fun while improving your health.
* Ready to take the first step? Visit FallsFreeWI.org for simple exercises you can do at home and more ways to stay strong, steady, and independent!

**Footwear**

* We all love cozy slippers or going barefoot at home, but when it comes to preventing falls, supportive footwear really matters.
* Shoes that don’t fit well or lack grip can increase your fall risk. The good news? Choosing the right pair can keep you steady on your feet — indoors and out. Look for shoes with:
	+ A firm heel collar for ankle support
	+ A beveled heel to reduce slips
	+ A thin, sturdy midsole so you can feel the ground
	+ A textured, non-slip sole
	+ Laces to keep shoes snug and secure
* Bonus tip: In winter, add ice cleats for extra traction on snow and ice!
* Your footwear is your foundation — make sure it’s working for you, not against you. Learn how to choose safer shoes and reduce your risk of falling at FallsFreeWI.org.

**Medications & More**

* Prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, herbal supplements, alcohol, and more can increase your risk of falling.
* Some medications — like sleeping pills, anxiety or depression meds, or those that quickly lower blood pressure — can cause dizziness, drowsiness, or balance issues.
* That’s why it’s so important to **check in with your doctor or pharmacist at least once a year**. Ask them to review everything you take to help keep you steady on your feet. A quick review can go a long way in protecting your independence.
* Find more tips and tools to stay safe and strong at **FallsFreeWI.org**.

**Sight**

* As we age, changes in vision are common – but impaired vision can also more than double your risk of falling.
* The good news? A **yearly eye exam** can catch vision changes early and help prevent falls before they happen.
* Simple steps can make a big difference:
	+ Wear sunglasses or a hat to cut down on glare
	+ Brighten up lighting in your home
	+ Stay alert and aware of your surroundings when walking
* Keeping your eyes sharp helps you stay steady and independent. Learn how vision plays a key role in fall prevention at **FallsFreeWI.org**.

**Hearing and Ear Health**

* As we age, our hearing naturally changes. In fact, about 1 in 3 older adults experience age-related hearing loss — and it can quietly increase the risk of falling.
* Hearing loss can be caused by aging, long-term exposure to loud noise, certain health conditions, or even medication side effects.
* Some common signs of hearing loss include:
	+ Trouble hearing on the phone
	+ Asking people to repeat themselves often
	+ Turning the TV up so loud others complain
* The good news? Over-the-counter hearing aids are now available — no prescription needed! And a simple hearing test once a year can catch changes early.
* Better hearing = better awareness of your surroundings = lower fall risk. Learn more about how you can improve your hearing to reduce your risk of falls at FallsFreeWI.org.

**Surroundings**

* Did you know most falls happen at home? The good news: a few simple changes can make your space much safer — and help you stay confident and independent.
* Try these quick fixes:
	+ Clear the clutter from walkways
	+ Add bright lighting throughout your home
	+ Skip the throw rugs when you can — they’re easy to trip on
	+ Keep an eye on your furry friends so you don’t accidentally trip over them
* Planning ahead, staying organized, and slowing down can go a long way in keeping your home safe.
* Ready to get started? Take our interactive Home Safety Challenge or download the Home Safety Checklist at FallsFreeWI.org.

\*older adults = 65+