

Stepping On Program 2023: Reducing Risk of Falls Among Older Adults

Public Value Statement

Reducing the risk of falls can increase older adults' quality of life and save thousands of dollars in healthcare and long-term care costs for both taxpayers and individuals of North Dakota.

The Situation

Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults. Twenty to thirty percent of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries that may make it difficult to get around or live independently, increasing the risk of early death. In 2020, falls were the second leading cause of injury-related deaths in North Dakota, and the leading cause of injury-related deaths in individuals over the age of 65. A total of 461 ND residents died due to falls from 2016 through 2020, an average of 92 deaths per year. By 2020, there were 122 fall-related fatalities, which is over a 76% increase from 2017.

Extension Response

NDSU Extension is partnering with community organizations to conduct *Stepping On* falls prevention workshops. *Stepping On* is a national evidence-based program designed to help older adults take control of their fall risks, explore coping behaviors, and use safety strategies in everyday life. Participants meet for 2 hours per week for 7 weeks, plus a 3-month follow-up session. There are 34 *Stepping On* certified facilitators offering workshops in North Dakota.

Impacts

In 2023, 155 participants attended one of the 14 *Stepping On* workshops offered in the state. From the 136 evaluations returned, participants ranged in age from 64 to 98 years, with an average age of 81 years. They reported:

- Their knowledge about the importance of balance and strength exercises for preventing falls increased 66 percent
- Their confidence in applying safe strategies in mobility situations increased 63 percent
- Their understanding of the relation between medications and falls increased by 61 percent

Overall, 79 percent of participants reported learning a significant or great extent from the program to prevent falls.

In a follow-up survey three months after the workshop, participants reported positive changes in behavior, such as:

- 72 percent exercise routinely
- 97percent had assessed their home environment for safety hazards
- 90 percent considered safe features when choosing footwear

Feedback

- "I'm much more aware of planning my route and how I am walking. I really watch for good lighting and rugs in my way. I tell myself 'heel to toe'. It's like I'm learning to walk again."
- "Never be embarrassed to ask questions of your concerns and to speak to your doctor- seek help when needed."
- "Good class-made me more mindful of what needs to be done to prevent falls."
- "Stay active with exercise daily-for strength and fitness."

New Facilitator Training

A 2.5-day training was held to train 10 new facilitators in November 2023.



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Collaborators

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Resource Links

www.ndsu.edu/agriculture/extension/programs/stepping