



PR-02/29/2008: Senior Falls are not Inevitable -- They are Preventable

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San Mateo County Health Department
Contact: Beverly Thames, (650) 573-3935

Senior Falls are not Inevitable -- They are Preventable

San Mateo County Health Department and Stanford Hospital and Clinics Announce Program to Reduce Senior Falls

SAN MATEO, Calif. -- Although people may fall at anytime during their lives, falling is of greater concern to older adults. Falls are the leading cause of injury among our aging population often resulting in catastrophic consequences. Two-thirds of older adults who survive a hip fracture will not return to their previous level of function, often resulting in earlier death. Falls are noted as the leading cause of death of San Mateo County residents, 75 years of age or older.

Peninsula Health Care District has awarded San Mateo County Health Department and Stanford Hospital and Clinics - Trauma Center a one-year grant to address this serious health care issue through the enrollment of 100 older adults into Stanford's Farewell to Falls Program.

Farewell to Falls

Farewell to Falls is an injury prevention program aimed at reducing the incidence of falls for older adults. The program was developed by Stanford University Medical Center's Trauma Program and implemented in January 2005. In 2007, the Farewell to Falls program was recognized as one of the Ten Creative Practices in Home Assessment and Modification by the National Council on Aging and the Home Safety Council.

Services Provided

Farewell to Falls is a free home-based program that focuses on the major risk factors for falls - medication management, home safety, strength and balance and other health factors. An Occupational Therapist visits the home two times to assess fall risk and provide recommendations. After the second visit, participants receive a phone call at least once/month to encourage compliance with recommendations such as doing exercises to a video or DVD and talking with their doctor about medications that may be considered a fall risk. After one year, the Occupational Therapist returns to the home to reassess fall risk and make additional recommendations.

Program Eligibility and Enrollment

If you are 65 years or older and live within the boundaries of Peninsula Health Care District (San Bruno, Millbrae, Hillsborough, San Mateo, and parts of Foster City and South San Francisco), you may be eligible to enroll into the Farewell to Falls Program. Enrollment is contingent on a few additional qualifications:

- Enrollees must live in an independent living situation. This may be either their own home (house, apartment, condominium), or with a family member, or in a senior retirement setting.
- Enrollees must be able to provide their own health history and follow instructions. Unfortunately seniors with dementia or Alzheimer's are not eligible for this program.
- Enrollees cannot be wheelchair bound. Use of assistive devices such as walkers and canes however are acceptable.

Please don't wait until you or one of your loved ones have fallen to enroll. Falls are not inevitable...they can be prevented. For more information about the Farewell to Falls Program call 650-724-9369.