

Falls are leading cause of hospital visits for New Mexicans 65 and older

Written by Staff Reports

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Martinez proclaims Sept. 22 ‘New Mexico Fall Prevention Awareness Day’

Gov. Susanna Martinez, in partnership with the New Mexico Department of Health, New Mexico Adult Fall Prevention Coalition, the Healthy Aging Collaborative, and Aging and Long Term Services Department, are working together to raise awareness that older adult falls are not a normal part of aging and many falls are preventable. Falls are the leading cause of emergency room visits, hospitalizations and injury-related deaths for New Mexico residents 65 and older.

Martinez has declared Sept. 22, the first day of fall, as statewide Fall Prevention Awareness Day.

New Mexico residents are urged to support fall prevention strategies for seniors such as: regular exercise, professional eye examinations, an adequate level of Vitamin D (specifically found to reduce the risk of falls) a medication review with their health care provider and home safety improvements. Nationally, one out of three seniors age 65 and older will experience a fall — that’s 12 million people in the United States.

“When older adults fall, it often leads to a loss of independence and reduced mobility, but falls can be prevented by understanding the needs of New Mexico seniors,” Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Lynn Gallagher said. “Seniors should wear low, non-slip shoes to provide better and more stable support. Living spaces should be well-lit and uncluttered.”

The latest state data show 347 adults 65-and-over who fell died from their injuries in 2015. The 2015 fall death rate for seniors was 104.3 per 100,000 people, up slightly from 102.2 per 100,000, in 2014.

A combination of interventions can significantly reduce adult falls. These include physical activity with balance and strength training; getting a fall risk assessment by a health care provider; having medications reviewed periodically; getting eyes checked annually; and making sure the home environment is safe and supportive.

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National Falls Prevention Awareness Day is observed across the country, with this year's theme of "Ready, Steady, Balance: Prevent Falls in 2016".

Visit: the New Mexico Adult Fall Prevention Coalition website, healthinsight.org.