



SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

1109 North Jackson Street
Albany, Georgia 31701-2022
(229) 430-4599 Fax (229) 430-5143 Emergency 888-430-4590
www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org

May 27, 2008
For Immediate Release

Carolyn Maschke, Public Information Officer
229-430-1969; 229-357-0257; cwmaschke@dhr.state.ga.us

Public Health lists four strategies to help older adults avoid fall-related injuries

Each year, one in three adults age 65 and older falls – and as many as 30 percent suffer injuries that can threaten their ability to live independent, healthy lives. Four simple tips can help reduce the risk of fall-related injuries among older adults, says Southwest Public Health District Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant.

“Every 18 seconds, an older adult is treated in an emergency room for a fall,” Grant said. “Adults 65 and older are hospitalized for fall-related injuries five times more often than they are for injuries from other causes. Every 35 minutes, someone in this population dies from fall-related injuries. What is especially tragic is that falls can be prevented.” Strategies to prevent fall-related injuries include:

- Exercising regularly
- Having a medication checkup
- Checking vision
- Making home safety improvements

“Our nation’s population is aging, and as it does, the fall-related injury rate has gone up,” Grant said. “Hip fractures are the most frequent broken bones from falls.”

Women sustain about 80 percent of all hip fractures, and as many as 20 percent of hip fracture patients die within a year, she said. Further, medical costs for women run two to three times higher than for men.

“By 2020, the annual direct and indirect costs of fall injuries is expected to reach \$43.9 billion dollars,” Grant said. “Taking steps now to prevent falls is well worth the investment.”

She said older adults reap benefits from exercise that improves leg strength, balance and mobility. “Check with your healthcare provider to see what type of exercise works best for you.”

Vision should be checked regularly for cataracts, glaucoma or poor vision, all of which can increase the risk of falls.

“Medications, including nonprescription drugs, should also be reviewed by a healthcare provider. Drug interactions or side-effects like drowsiness or dizziness can make falls more likely,” said Grant.

Finally, Grant said, homes should be inspected for hazards. “Check for and remove trip hazards, add brighter lighting and place non-slip mats on shower and bathtub floors,” she said. “Consider adding grab bars next to and inside your shower or tub. Make sure rails on stairs and steps are in good condition and will support your weight.”

###

Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth