



Reduced Fear of Falls Lowers the Risk of Injury for Elderly

LifePlans shares confidence building and physical well-being tips as it commemorates National Fall Prevention Awareness Week.

Waltham, MA (PRWEB) - Sept. 24, 2015 – Reducing the fear of falling is one oft-overlooked way to lessen the risk of injury in older individuals, said Marc A. Cohen, Ph.D., Chief Research and Development Officer for [LifePlans, Inc.](#), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Munich Re, as he marked the start of National Fall Prevention Awareness Week (Sept. 23-29, 2015).

“Our extensive research shows that people who worry about falling tend to reduce their activity levels and adopt a more sedentary lifestyle. The result is weaker lower body strength. This impacts both their balance and how they walk, putting them at an even higher risk of taking a fall,” he said.

Not only do falls often result in fractures and head injuries that may lead to early death or make it difficult for individuals to live independently, they also come with a high price tag.

“In 2013, the direct medical costs of falls for people age 65 and older were about \$34 billion,” Cohen said. “And people aged 75 and older who fall are four to five times more likely than others to be admitted to a long-term care facility for a year or longer.”

Because many older adults resist formal exercise programs and avoid gyms, doctors and family members need to find alternative ways to increase physical activity and boost confidence. LifePlans fall prevention expert suggestions include the following:

- Perform a short series of warm-up stretches before getting out of bed. Wrist and ankle rolls, flex-and-point foot movements, and arm and hand stretches above the head wake up the spine and help assure a body is ready for its first steps of the day.
- Turn everyday shopping tasks into opportunities for more physical activity. When going to a grocery store or large box store, walk all of the store’s aisles rather than visiting only the aisles that contain items on a shopping list.
- Take advantage of climate-controlled malls for a safe walking environment. Mall doors often open several hours before the stores, allowing walkers an opportunity to navigate the halls minus the large crowds.

As always, individuals should check with their doctors before embarking on increased physical activity.

Another proven way to reduce the chance of falls is for health plans, long-term care insurers and providers to enroll at-risk seniors in a comprehensive fall prevention program. The LifePlans [LIFT Wellness Program^{\(SM\)}](#) (Living Independently and Falls-free Together) which evolved out of a multi-year research study on fall prevention with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is one such system. LIFT incorporates a comprehensive in-home assessment performed by a nurse, a customized action plan for participants and their

physicians, follow-up health coaching phone calls, and a LIFT Wellness Toolkit with a variety of items to support the care plan.

“After conducting extensive follow-up to determine if the LIFT program was having a positive impact on health outcomes, we were pleased to find that 24 percent of LIFT participants reported feeling less fearful about falling and that 20 percent reported they were less likely to limit their activities,” Cohen said.

The study, which showed that reported fall rates declined by 29 percent for participants during their first 12 months in the program, also found a 33 percent reduction in long-term care and LTSS related costs over a three-year period.

“Individuals, consumers and the U.S. health insurance industry all benefit when seniors are able to safely remain in their own homes longer,” he said.

About LifePlans

LifePlans, Inc., a leader in health assessments, member engagement and care management, has been helping the nation’s leading healthcare and insurance organizations improve health outcomes, lower medical spend, reduce risk and increase quality since 1987. With an acclaimed research team, evidence-based results, and deep expertise working with senior and vulnerable populations, LifePlans offerings include HRAs, fall prevention, care transitions, health coaching, quality compliance programs, underwriting and risk management solutions. LifePlans is an NCQA-certified subsidiary of Munich Re. For more information, go to www.lifeplansinc.com.

LifePlans, Inc.

51 Sawyer Road, Suite 340
Waltham, MA 02453

www.lifeplansinc.com