

# A Matter of Balance

*Managing Concerns  
About Falls*

*Goodwill **Easter***

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What Is A Matter of Balance?

***A Matter of Balance*** is designed to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels among older adults who manifest this concern. The program was developed and formally evaluated by the Roybal Center for Enhancement of Late-Life Function at Boston University. In October 2003, the Administration on Aging awarded a three-year evidence-based disease prevention grant to Maine Health's Partnership for Healthy Aging to translate *A Matter of Balance* into a program that uses volunteer lay leaders as facilitators instead of health care professionals and to serve as an innovative national model for addressing fall prevention.

- The Problem: Addressing Fear

Studies indicate that up to half of community dwelling older adults experience fear of falling, and that many respond to this concern by curtailing activity. *Being inactive results in loss of muscle strength and balance.* It can also compromise social interaction and increase the risk of isolation, depression and anxiety. Fear of Falling (FOF) can actually contribute to falling.



Have You Or Someone You know Experienced a Fall?

*A Matter of Balance* acknowledges the risk of falling but emphasizes practical coping strategies to reduce this concern. *Trained facilitators* conduct eight (8) two-hour sessions designed for groups of 10-12 participants.

During the class, participants learn to view falls and fear of falling (FOF) as controllable and set realistic goals for increasing activity. They also find ways to change the environment to reduce fall risk factors and learn simple exercises to increase strength and balance.

- The Problem: Facts about Falling

More than one out of four older people fall each year but less than half tell their doctor.

*Falling once* doubles your chances of falling again.

One out of five falls causes serious injury such as broken bones or a head injury.

Up to 30 % of community dwelling adults fall each year.



## Do You Have a Fear of Falling (FOF) ?

### During 8 two-hour classes, participants learn:

To view falls and fear of falling (FOF) as controllable.

To set realistic goals for increasing activity.

To change their environment to reduce fall risk factors.

To promote exercise to increase strength and balance.

## • The Problem: Medical Facts

Each year, 3 million older people are treated in emergency departments for fall related injuries.

Over 800,000 patients a year are hospitalized because of a fall injury, most often because of a head or hip fracture.

Each year at least 300,000 older people are hospitalized for hip fractures.



Are Falls Preventable?

### What Happens During Classes:

- Group Discussion
- Problem-Solving
- Skill Building
- Assertiveness training
- Exercise training
- Videos
- Sharing practical solutions

### • The Problem: Financial Costs

More than 95% of hip fractures are caused by falling, usually by falling sideways.

Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

In 2020, the total medical costs for falls totaled more than \$50 billion. Medicare and Medicaid shouldered 75% of these costs.

Many falls do not cause injuries. But one out of five falls causes a serious injury such as a broken bone or a head injury. These injuries can make it hard for a person to do every day activities or live on their own.



## Who Can Benefit from A Matter of Balance?

### Anyone who:

Is concerned about falls

Has sustained a fall in the past

Restricts activities because of concerns about falling

Is interested in improving flexibility, balance and strength

Is age 60 or older, ambulatory and able to problem-solve

## • The Problem: Risks for Falls

Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, become afraid of falling. This fear may cause a person to cut down on their everyday activities. When a person is less active, they become weaker and this increases their chances of falling.

Research has identified many conditions that contribute to falling.

- Lower body weakness, Vitamin D deficiency, Difficulty with walking and balance, Use of medicines: tranquilizers, sedatives, or antidepressants, even over the counter (OTC) medicines can affect balance, Vision, Foot pain or poor footwear.



You Can Prevent Falls and Build Strength

**Matter of Balance Outcomes:**

**Participant Outcomes:**

97% - more comfortable talking about fear of falling (FOF)

97% - feel comfortable increasing activity

99% - plan to continue exercising

***98% - would recommend A Matter of Balance***

**Comments:**

I am more aware of my surroundings. I take time to do things and don't hurry.

I have begun to exercise and am looking forward to a walking program.

I have more pep in not being afraid.

- **The Problem: Risks for Falls**

**Home hazards or dangers such as: broken or uneven steps and throw rugs or clutter that can be tripped over.**

**Most falls are caused by a combination of risk factors. The more risk factors a person has, the greater their chances of falling.**



Falls Can Be Prevented

**People who have experienced MOB say:**

Increased confidence in taking a walk, climbing stairs, carrying bundles without falling:

- More confidence that they can increase their strength, find ways to reduce falls, and protect themselves if they do fall
- An increase in the amount they exercise on a regular basis
- Fewer falls after taking A Matter of Balance (MOB)

- **You Can Maintain Balance and Safety**

- **Talk to your Doctor:**

Ask your doctor or healthcare provider to **evaluate your risk** for falling.

Ask your doctor or pharmacist to **review your medicines** to see if any might make you dizzy or sleepy.

- **Get Screened for Osteoporosis**

Screened and treated if needed.





Falls Can Be Prevented  
Aging Neighborhoods

**My Mobility Plan:**

- Do you or your loved ones have a plan to stay safe, mobile, and independent as you age?
- Work through the three sections of maintaining your Mobility:
- **Myself** – How to stay independent
- **My Home** – How to stay safe at home

(**MOB Home Safety Checklist**, adapted from Safety for Older Consumers a publication from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission ).

- **You Can Maintain Balance and Safety**

- **Do Strength and Balance Exercises**

Do exercises that make your legs stronger and improve your balance. *Tai Chi* is a good example of this kind of exercise.

- **Have Your Eyes Checked**

Have your eyes checked by an eye doctor at least once a year and update your eye glasses if needed.



Falls Can Be Prevented  
**Aging Neighborhoods**

**My Mobility Plan:**

- **My Neighborhood** - How to stay mobile in your community – A Plan to get around in your community.

**Why Have a Mobility Plan?** Falls and motor vehicle crashes, which are related to mobility, are the leading causes of injury and injury death in older adults.

There are many negative outcomes for older adults if they stop driving or fall, including reductions in their health, social interaction, and the ability to get around.

- **You Can Maintain Balance and Safety**

- **Make Your Home Safer**

- Get rid of things you can trip over.
- Add grab bars inside and outside your tub and shower and next to toilet.
- Put railings on both side of the stairs.
- Make sure your home has lots of light by adding more and brighter light bulbs.