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## Don't Let a Fear of Falls Hold You Back

Each year on the first day of fall, national organizations from the *Falls Free Coalition* and the National Council on Aging (NCOA) join together for National Falls Prevention Awareness Day, a day of action to help raise awareness and prevention of falls. On Friday, September 22, the YMCA of Western Monmouth County is asking older adults, caregivers, family members and health care professionals to unite to raise awareness to prevent falls among older adults.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an older adult in the U.S. is treated in the ER for a fall-related injury every 14 seconds and dies from a fall-related injury every 29 minutes. Additionally, falls put an immense strain on the health care system, with the financial toll expected to reach \$67.7 billion by 2020. The good news is falls are preventable, and the first step to prevention is understanding risk. With a focus on healthy aging, the Y is committed to helping older adults learn their fall risk and access programs that can help them reduce their risk for falls.

"Falling and fear of falling may can prevent older adults from staying active, which leads to reduced mobility, diminished quality of life and actually increases their risk of falling," said Cynthia Joy, President & CEO of the YMCA of Western Monmouth County. "The good news is that falls are highly preventable and help is available for older adults and their families who want to get active but don't know how."

As a leading community-based organization dedicated to improving the nation's health for all families, the YMCA of Western Monmouth County encourages older adults to learn their risk for falls by taking a fall risk test at <https://ymcanj.org/falls-prevention-risk-assessment-2017/>. Once risk is assessed, the Y is helping older adults feel strong, steady and safe by reducing fall risk through fitness classes like Silver Sneakers, Strength & Balance, Tai-Chi, as well as water fitness classes like Swimnastics and Joint Effort.

The CDC suggests these basic lifestyle and safety changes to help reduce risk or prevent falls:

- Begin an exercise program to improve your leg strength & balance.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicines.
- Get annual eye check-ups & update your eyeglasses.
- Make your home safer by:
  - Removing clutter & tripping hazards.
  - Putting railings on all stairs & adding grab bars in the bathroom.
  - Installing proper lighting, especially on stairs.

To learn more about the YMCA of Western Monmouth County, please visit [www.ymcanj.org](http://www.ymcanj.org).