



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### **Hawai'i Department of Health launches annual senior fall prevention awareness campaign, June 17 – July 27**

HONOLULU – For most people, a fall may result in cuts, bruises or sometimes broken bones that sideline them for weeks. But for older people, falls can cause more serious injuries, including a trip to the emergency room or even death. To reduce injuries and fatalities from falls among the elderly, the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) is launching its annual senior fall prevention awareness campaign today through July 27.

The campaign will feature a broadcast public service announcement, educational video about fall prevention, distribution of materials with medication reviews and balance testing information, “A Matter of Balance” coaches trainings, Tai Chi for Health Institute classes, and community presentations about preventing falls among older adults.

“As Hawai'i's population continues to age, it is important for everyone to be prepared and equipped to prevent falls, especially among older adults,” said Danette Wong Tomiyasu, deputy director of health resources. “Simple falls may seem relatively harmless, but they can significantly impact the overall health and well-being of elderly adults and could lead to severe injury and sometimes death.”

Statistics from DOH's Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention Branch (EMSIPSB) show that about 130 seniors in Hawai'i die each year from fall-related injuries, and another 9,400 are treated in hospitals for non-fatal injuries, including nearly 1,900 who are hospitalized.

Although Hawai'i has a lower nonfatal injury rate for senior falls when compared to the national average, falls still exact a heavy emotional, physical and financial toll on seniors, their caregivers and the healthcare system, resulting in estimated hospital charges of nearly \$207 million a year statewide.

DOH offers the following advice to seniors, family members and caregivers to prevent falls and fall-related injuries:

- Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medications annually;
- Get an eye exam at least once a year;
- If you live alone, get a life-saving Personal Electronic Safety Device;
- Make your home safer by removing fall hazards and improving lighting; and
- Exercise regularly to increase balance and flexibility. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), exercise programs such as those offered by the Tai Chi for Health Institute can increase strength and improve balance, making falls much less likely.

“Preventing falls is an on-going effort,” said Stan Michaels, DOH fall prevention coordinator. “The best preventive methods involve addressing and minimizing hazards before they pose a threat. Not every accident can be avoided. However, taking certain precautions can extend a senior’s independence and greatly reduce their risk of injury and death.”

DOH and the Hawai‘i Fall Prevention Consortium are sponsoring the campaign in collaboration with its new partner, **Pharmacare Hawaii**, and founding sponsors Safeway Supermarkets, Foodland Supermarkets, Times Supermarkets, and KTA Superstores. Kaiser Permanente, Project Vision Hawaii and City Mill round out supporters for the statewide program.

The Hawai‘i Fall Prevention Consortium was founded in 2003 with support from DOH’s Injury Prevention and Control Program. The consortium includes government agencies, professional associations, non-profit organizations, hospitals, care facilities and senior organizations.

Upcoming fall prevention activities statewide include:

### **Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention Classes – June to August**

From June to August, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention classes certified by the Tai Chi for Health Institute will be offered at more than 33 locations statewide. For more information, call (808) 733-9202 or go to the DOH website at:

<http://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/home/preventing-falls/tai-chi/>.

### **Project Vision Hawai‘i Partners with the Fall Prevention Consortium – June 21**

On Friday, June 21, from 9 – 11 a.m., Project Vision Hawai‘i and the Fall Prevention Consortium will offer free eye tests and vision screening at the Lanakila Multi-Purpose Senior Center.

Project Vision Hawai‘i is the state’s only mobile eye and health screening service, bringing fully equipped Vision Vans to locations statewide. Visit the Project Vision Hawai‘i website at

<http://www.projectvisionhawaii.org/> for additional information.

### **A Matter of Balance “Coaches” Trainings – June 28**

“A Matter of Balance” is an evidence-based fall reduction program supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It targets seniors that have a fear of falling or have become home-bound because of their concern about falling and injuring themselves. DOH will offer and coordinate training opportunities for those who wish to become certified coaches for the A Matter of Balance project. A “coaches” training will be available on Sunday, June 28 on Hawai‘i Island, and additional courses will be offered later this summer on Maui, Oahu and Kauai. Call (808) 733-9292 for course schedules and more information.

### **“Fall-Proof” Senior Assistive Safety Devices at Home – July 20 and 27**

City Mill will host “meet-and-greet” sessions with the public to offer home safety recommendations. Home safety specialists from DOH will be available to answer questions about the latest senior assistive safety devices to help make a home as “fall-proof” as possible.

- City Mill Iwilei: Saturday, July 20, from 9 a.m. to noon
- City Mill Pearl City: Saturday, July 27, from 9 a.m. to noon

See the following fact sheet for other resources and activities taking place during the state’s upcoming senior fall prevention awareness campaign.

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## **FACT SHEET**

### **2019 Senior Fall Prevention Awareness Campaign**

The 2019 Senior Fall Prevention Awareness Campaign will include the following activities and resources:

#### **Fall Prevention Tips**

Beginning June 17, more than 51 stores and clinics statewide representing seven major market, pharmacy and hardware corporations will distribute 51,000 “bag-stuffers” that contain fall prevention tips for seniors along with other helpful health resource information.

#### **Fall Prevention Video Produced by Kaiser Permanente**

In partnership with the Fall Prevention Consortium and KHON2, Kaiser Permanente Hawai'i produced a fall prevention video outlining many aspects of fall prevention for seniors. The video can be shown during home visits by social workers, public health nurses, and has been shown in clinic waiting rooms. The video can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YB2OPxllvl&feature=youtu.be>.

Kaiser Permanente will continue to offer medication reviews, regular eye and hearing checkups, resource recommendations for fall-proofing homes and advice on how to stay active. They also support Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention classes at many YMCA's on Oahu.

Additional information and fall prevention support for Kaiser members can be found at [www.kp.org/healthyaging](http://www.kp.org/healthyaging) or by calling the Kaiser Prevention and Health Education Department for a free listing of programs and classes at (808) 432-2260.

#### **Public Service Announcements**

During July and August, public service announcements on fall prevention will air on KHON, KGMB, KHNL and KIKU.

#### **Fall Prevention Video Re-Broadcasts**

'Ōlelo (Community Access Television) will feature “Hana Hou” re-broadcasts featuring the two award-winning educational videos, “*Senior to Senior*” and “*Caregiver to Caregiver*,” which give a detailed demonstration of what everyone can do to help prevent falls for seniors. To request a presentation or if your organization would like a copy of the videos, e-mail

[stanley.michaels@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:stanley.michaels@doh.hawaii.gov).

#### **Community Presentations**

From June through August 2019, Stan Michaels from DOH's EMS and Injury Prevention System Branch and Michael Dowell, Chair of the Fall Prevention Consortium, will give presentations to various senior organizations and community groups around the state.

The presentations will feature the new network public service announcement featuring fall prevention tips, plus new information gathered by Michaels during the 2018 NCOA National Falls Prevention Resources Conference in Washington D.C. Hawai'i was honored in 2016 as having “the finest senior fall prevention public awareness campaign in the nation.”

Go to <http://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/home/preventing-falls/information/> or call (808) 733-9202 for more information about fall prevention for seniors.