



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 19, 2021

21-118

**Statewide fall prevention awareness campaign begins August 22  
designed to reduce fall injuries among kupuna**

HONOLULU – Fall-related injuries and fatalities among Hawai'i seniors are reaching troubling numbers. Every year in Hawai'i on average 128 seniors die, 2,010 are hospitalized, and 9,950 are treated in emergency departments for fall-related accidents.

Falls disproportionately affect the elderly, and statistics show those older than age 65 are the most vulnerable. In addition to the emotional and physical impact on seniors and their caregivers, falls create a significant financial toll on families and the healthcare system. Annually, in Hawai'i, fall-related trauma results in \$120 million in hospital and medical charges.

The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) and the Hawai'i Fall Prevention Consortium in collaboration with The Tai Chi for Health Institute and City Mill are launching a statewide senior fall prevention awareness campaign from Aug. 22 – Sept. 22. The campaign features new public service announcements airing on Hawai'i TV networks, a tai chi instructor workshop, "Fall Proof" workshops at City Mill, and community presentations focusing on falls prevention for older adults. All events will follow and are subject to pandemic restrictions.

The Hawai'i Fall Prevention Consortium was founded in 2003 with support and leadership from DOH's Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch (EMSIPSB). The consortium includes government agencies, professional associations, non-profit organizations, hospitals, care facilities and senior organizations. Hawai'i's fall prevention program was recognized as "the finest public awareness campaign in the nation" during a past NCOA National Falls Prevention Resources Conference in Alexandria, Virginia.

"Almost every hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, a senior with a fall-related injury is transported by ambulance to a hospital emergency department. Yet many falls and fall-related injuries can be prevented with existing knowledge and technology," said Dr. Alvin C. Bronstein, chief of EMSIPSB. "The Department of Health is pleased to be able to continue this valuable program to help ensure the safety and well-being of Hawai'i seniors, the fastest growing

segment of our population.” The following programs are offered during the fall awareness campaign:

### **“Aging Isn’t for Sissies”**

This award-winning presentation uses humor to educate participants about all major fall prevention techniques including medication reviews by a pharmacist or doctor, annual eye examinations, a home safety check, a question and answer session with your doctor, and the option of using a “medical alert” device, especially for those living alone. Currently, EMSIPSB is scheduling presentations based on community COVID capabilities on all islands. All presentations will follow current COVID-19 distance and safety guidelines. Call (808) 733-9202 to find out if there is a program in your area.

### **“Fall-Proof” Senior Assistive Safety Devices for Home Workshop**

The City Mill stores located on Nimitz Hwy. and in Pearl City on O’ahu host this program. The workshop demonstrates a variety of available home safety equipment and devices (bath and shower grab bars, anti-slip materials, nightlights) as well as techniques (reduce clutter, install safety rails, install enhanced lighting/nightlights) that make a home safer. Presentations will follow all current COVID-19 distance and safety guidelines. See participating City Mill stores for a schedule of these workshops.

### **Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention Instructor Workshop**

A Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention (TCAFP) Instructor Workshop is being held to re-certify TCAFP instructors. This is a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsored exercise program that teaches attendees how to relax mind and body. The program uses choreographed and classic tai chi movements linking total body movements into maximum physical and mental health benefits. Tai chi is one of the world’s leading fall prevention exercises and supported by CDC as a valuable fall prevention activity. All classes will follow current COVID-19 distance and safety guidelines. For information on community classes based on pandemic restrictions, call (808) 733-9202 or visit:

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

The Hawai’i State Department of Health offers the following important advice to seniors, their family members, and caregivers to prevent falls and fall-related injuries that can limit mobility and independence:

- Annually review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist to ensure they are not affecting your balance.
- Receive annual eye examinations.
- If you live alone, a Personal Electronic Safety Device is essential. These devices save lives every day.
- Make your home safer by removing fall hazards and improving lighting.
- Exercise regularly to increase balance and flexibility. According to the CDC, evidence-based exercise programs such as Tai Chi for Health can increase strength and improve balance, making falls much less likely.

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