



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

ELIZABETH A. CHAR, MD
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 23, 2022

22-079

Statewide fall prevention awareness campaign begins to reduce kupuna fall injuries

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) and the Hawai'i Fall Prevention Consortium are launching a statewide campaign to reduce kupuna fall injuries. The campaign runs through July 17 and features new public service announcements, tai chi classes, a tai chi instructor workshop, medication reviews for seniors, "Fall Proof" workshops, and community presentations that focus on preventing falls among older adults.

"Almost every hour, a senior is transported by ambulance to an emergency department in our state because of a fall injury. Yet many falls and fall-related injuries can be prevented with existing knowledge and technology," said Dr. Alvin Bronstein, chief of the Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention Systems Branch. "The DOH is glad to be continuing this valuable program to help ensure the safety and well-being of Hawai'i seniors."

Each year from 2016-2021, Hawai'i averaged 144 seniors deaths, 2,251 hospitalizations, and 10,046 treated in emergency departments because of unintentional falls.

Elderly are disproportionately affected by falls. Statistics show those older than age 65 are the most vulnerable. Falls have emotional and physical impacts to both seniors and their caregivers creating a significant financial toll on families and the healthcare system; over \$223 million in hospital and physician charges were incurred in 2021 for fall-related injuries in Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Fall Prevention Consortium was founded in 2003 with support and leadership from the Injury Prevention and Control Program of the DOH. The consortium includes government agencies, professional associations, non-profits, hospitals, and senior organizations.

DOH 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:

- Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medications yearly;
- Get an annual eye exam;
- If you live alone, get a 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, evidence-based exercise programs such as Tai Chi for Health can increase strength and improve balance, making falls much less likely.

Hawai'i's fall prevention program has been recognized as one of "the finest public awareness campaigns in the nation" during a past National Council on Aging (NCOA) National Falls Prevention Resources Conference in Alexandria, Va.

"Aging Isn't for Sissies" fall prevention presentations

This award-winning presentation will continue at various locations around O'ahu and on neighbor islands pending current COVID specifications and protocols. Currently the Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch (EMSIPSB) is scheduling presentations based on community requests. Call (808) 733-9202 or email stanley.michaels@doh.hawaii.gov to inquire as to when and where the next event will be.

"Fall-Proof" Senior Assistive Safety Devices at Home

The City Mill stores on Nimitz, and in Pearl City will host fall prevention and home safety specialists from the DOH. The public will be informed of the exact dates the "Fall Proof" workshops will occur. These events will use all current COVID safety protocols. Seniors and their families are invited to ask questions about the latest senior assistive safety devices that can help make a home safer and almost "fall-proof". See stores for a schedule of DOH events.

TIMES Pharmacies will offer medication reviews for seniors

Pharmacists at TIMES will offer medication reviews for kupuna by appointment during the campaign. Seniors are urged to speak with the pharmacists at TIMES to see if multiple medications are a possible concern and may contribute to dizziness or a possible fall.

Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention classes held at all O'ahu YMCAs

Ongoing classes in Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention (TCAFP) are offered at all O'ahu YMCAs. All classes are led by Certified TCAFP instructors, and their certified skills are one of the reasons this exercise is one of the world's leading fall prevention programs. Contact your YMCA for more information.

Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention Instructor Workshop

In August, a Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention (TCAFP) Instructor Workshop is being held to re-certify instructors in TCAFP. Certification is maintained by the International Tai Chi for Health Institute. For information on community classes call (808) 733-9202 or go to the DOH website at <https://health.hawaii.gov/injuryprevention/home/preventing-falls/tai-chi/>

###