



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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### **Statewide fall prevention awareness campaign begins June 22, designed to reduce fall injuries among kūpuna**

HONOLULU, HI – Fall-related injuries and fatalities among Hawai'i seniors (ages 65 years and older) are reaching troubling numbers. Every year in Hawai'i an average of 144 seniors die, 2,184 are hospitalized, and 9,677 are treated in emergency departments because of unintentional falls.

Falls disproportionately affect our older adults. In addition to the emotional and physical trauma of falling, falls create a significant financial toll on families and the health care system. Over \$241 million in hospital and physician charges were incurred in 2022 for fall-related injuries in Hawai'i.

What is most important to note is that **FALLS ARE PREVENTABLE!**

Each year the State Department of Health and the Hawai'i Fall Prevention Consortium sponsor a Fall Prevention Campaign. This year's campaign will start on June 22 in collaboration with the Tai Chi for Health Institute, Times and KTA pharmacies, City Mill, Project Dana, Catholic Charities, and Project Vision Hawai'i.

The campaign will feature new public service announcements airing on five Hawai'i TV stations, (KGMB, KHNL, KHON, KITV and KIKU), tai chi classes at all O'ahu YMCAs (includes an instructor workshop) and community presentations focusing on preventing falls among older adults. Times and KTA Pharmacies will also host free medication reviews for kūpuna.

Hawai'i's fall prevention program was recognized as one of "the finest public awareness campaigns in the nation" at a past NCOA National Falls Prevention Resources Conference in Alexandria, Virginia.

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

“Almost every hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, a senior is transported by ambulance to an emergency room 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 Department of Health is glad to be continuing this valuable program to help ensure the safety and well-being of Hawai'i seniors, the fastest growing segment of our population.”

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:

- Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medications yearly;
- Get an annual eye exam;
- If you live alone, get a Personal Electronic Safety Device as they save lives every day;
- Make your home safer by removing fall hazards like electrical cords running across the floor or loose throw rugs, improving lighting; and
- Exercise regularly to increase balance and flexibility – Walking is always great, but be sure to incorporate activities that challenge your balance and keep your bones strong (strength or resistance training).

\*According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, evidence-based exercise programs such as Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention can increase strength and improve balance, making falls much less likely.

CDC also has some great websites if you're looking for additional information:

**Still Going Strong:** <https://www.cdc.gov/stillgoingstrong/index.html>

**STEADI—Older Adult Fall Prevention:** <https://www.cdc.gov/steady/>

### **“Aging Isn't for the Weak” Fall Prevention Presentations**

Look for this award-winning presentation being held at various locations around O'ahu as well as select neighbor island locations. The Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch (EMSIPSB) is currently scheduling additional presentations. Call 733-9202 to request a presentation, and to inquire as to when and where the next event will be conducted.

### **“Medication Reviews” available during the month of June at Times and KTA Pharmacies**

Medication reviews are important for all kūpuna who take both prescription and over-the-counter medications and/or supplements. Adding or mixing different medications (this includes vitamins and/or herbal supplements) without your physician(s)' knowledge can be dangerous. It is essential that a senior k̄puna make an appointment to have a comprehensive review of ALL

their medications and supplements. Kūpuna should take advantage of these FREE Medication Reviews by calling and making an appointment at a local Times or KTA pharmacy.

**Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention Classes and Instructor Workshop**

All O'ahu YMCAs have classes in Tai Chi for Arthritis/Fall Prevention (TCAFP). Tai chi is a great low impact exercise and this class is a CDC and National Council on Aging Approved and Certified Exercise designed to improve balance. An Instructor Workshop is being offered to re-certify instructors in TCAFP to broaden the availability of this great fall-prevention exercise. For information on future community classes call (808) 733-9202.

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