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WELLNESS, HEALTH & FITNESS

Steps to Becoming Fall Proof

by Joan Maiden

I grew up with "Ding dong, Avon calling". My mother was the neighborhood Avon lady for almost forty years. She was active and on-the-go until she had her first fall in her seventies, spending the next ten years in pain, with disability. Unfortunately, she was just another statistic.



As many as 28% - 45% of people over sixty-five fall each year. Falls are responsible for more than 18,000 deaths and nearly 450,000 hospitalizations per year and it is estimated that there is at least an equal number of falls that go unreported.

Most falls are caused by a decline in balance. Poor balance can be caused by decreased vision, reduced strength, stiff joints, poor posture and some medications. Talk to your doctor about your balance problems to see if any medications you are on may be contributing to the problem.

Poor balance can be delayed, minimized and actually improved with proper training. Falls can be reduced by as much as fifty percent with strength and balance training and balance training is now recommended as part of the physical activity regime for older adults.

Building strength can make it easier to pick your feet up as you walk, helping to avoid the "shuffling" gait adopted by so many older adults which increases the risk of stumbling and falling. Stretching and flexibility training to keep the joints limber can also improve your gait.

The world is not always steady and stable. Balance training on a wobble board, Bosu trainer and/or stability ball can retrain you to catch yourself when you start to lose your balance. Simple exercises such as standing on one foot, walking heel to toe as if walking on a tight rope and making an obstacle course of



such things as rolled towels, pillows and other objects to step over and around can also help improve your balance.

My mother passed away at eight-five after developing pneumonia resulting from another fall. If she had been able to avoid that first fall, her last years may have been lived with less pain and she would have been able to ring a lot more doorbells.