WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for September 27, 2021
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about taking charge of falls prevention, and as always, look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Last Wednesday I had the pleasure of walking a few laps around the county fairgrounds track with dedicated Coshocton Senior Center employees and supporters. We were walking towards "10 Million Steps to Prevent Falls."

Each year about 1 in 4 older adults fall. We may associate getting older with a propensity to fall, but the truth is most falls can be prevented. The most common risk factors that can result in a fall are physical, behavioral, and environmental risks. Physical risk factors are changes in your body that increase your risk for a fall. Behavioral risk factors are things we do or don't do that increase our falls risk. Environmental risk factors include hazards in our home or community. The most common ways to prevent falls are strength and balance exercises, managing medications, having regular vision check-ups, and making the home environment safer.

Some people may think that the best way to prevent a fall is to stay at home and limit activity. But reducing activity results in decreased strength and balance. The old adage of "use it or lose it" is very true when it comes to muscle mass as we age. Regular activity, like walking, as well as strength and flexibility exercises help improve balance.

Over half of falls take place at home. Some modifications can really help, like installing grab bars in the bathroom, making sure there are two secure rails on all stairs, adding lighting around stairs, and painting outdoor steps with non-slip paint. Other easy, but very important, actions include removing clutter, getting rid of those throw rugs, and wearing clean well-supported shoes inside the home.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates about $50 billion annually is spent on medical costs related to non-fatal fall injuries and $754 million is spent related to fatal falls. However, there is an additional cost to consider- the impact that falls have on caregivers. Research has shown that after a care recipient's first fall, caregivers report a significant increase in caregiver burden, fear of falling, and depression.

The National Council on Aging has a “Falls Prevention Conversation Guide For Caregivers” that provides caregivers with tools to help them take preventative steps to reduce the risk of their loved one falling. They have identified three steps to help prevent a loved one’s serious injury, help them stay healthy, and maintain an independent lifestyle.

1. It may be time to talk about falls prevention. This resource contains a checklist to help determine if you or the person you are caring for is at risk for a fall and if further action is needed.

2. Planning a conversation about falls prevention with others. If you determine from the checklist that you or the person you care for is at risk for falling, then the next step is to start a conversation with family, friends, or those in the community who may be supportive.

3. Develop a falls prevention action plan. This last section of the resource is very helpful as it specifies seven different action steps to take. And it doesn’t put the pressure all on the caregiver. It asks you to identify friends and family that can help with each step.

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, there are approximately 43.5 million informal caregivers that have provided unpaid care to an adult in the last 12 months. Over one-third of caregivers are over age 65. I am grateful for the hundreds of caregivers in our community who are giving of themselves daily to provide quality of life for their loves ones.

Here are some upcoming programs from OSU Extension: The OSU Extension Home Food Preservation Team is teaching a Canning Winter Squash webinar tomorrow afternoon, September 28 from 4:00-5:00 PM. Please register at our website coshocton.osu.edu.

The Coshocton County Fair is quickly approaching October 1-7 and this year’s Fall Foliage and Farm Tour will be October 16 and 17.

Also, I will be teaching a Holiday Jams and Jellies Class at Clary Gardens in November. We’ll be making some uniquely flavored jams and jellies, perfect for Christmas gifts. Stay tuned for more details!

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!