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“Stepping On” Falls Prevention Program

The Fargo, South Dakota VA implemented an innovative 7-week program, “*Stepping On*”, to provide education to people who have fallen or have a fear of falling, who are still living in their own home, and are able to walk without a walker or cane. Participants taking part in the program received ankle weights and exercise instruction with a physical therapist. Guest speakers such as pharmacists, vision specialists and police provided Veterans with valuable information regarding fall prevention. A follow-up “booster” class was held three months later to assess progress and answer questions. The program, which was developed in Australia and implemented in several places in the US, has shown considerable effectiveness in reducing falls.

Learn more: www.fargo.va.gov/FARGO/features/SteppingOn.asp ◆

Did You Know?

- June is National Safety Month which highlights prevention of injuries from prescription drugs, slips, trips, and falls, distracted driving, and other safety concerns such as heat-related illness.
- Injuries due to falls are a leading cause of disability for people of all ages, but particularly for those over age 65.
- One in three older adults falls each year leading to broken bones and other health problems.
- You are more likely to fall if you have fallen in the past year, have a health condition that affects your balance, have trouble getting out of a chair, or take medicines that help you sleep.
- To help prevent falls, exercises which improve balance and leg strength may be helpful, but consult your doctor before adopting an exercise regimen.
- Prescription painkiller overdoses are a growing problem in the United States. To prevent overdose, follow the dosage recommendations of your doctor or pharmacist.
- Certain foods, beverages, alcohol, caffeine, and cigarettes can interact with prescription medication making it very important to speak with your doctor or pharmacist for more specific information about your situation.
- Almost one in five automobile crashes that injured someone involved distracted driving.
- Heat stroke is when the body becomes unable to control its temperature and can cause death or permanent disability.



Learn more: www.cdc.gov.healthfinder.gov ◆

Patient Aligned Care Teams Improve Access and Veteran Satisfaction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACTs), VA’s model for more personalized and accessible primary care delivery, is improving access to healthcare and Veteran satisfaction, according to data released by VA. Since its inception in 2010, the PACT program has transformed the way Veterans receive their care by offering a coordinated team approach squarely focused on Veterans’ wellness and disease prevention. Teams are comprised of a primary care provider, a Registered Nurse care manager, a clinical associate, and an administrative associate. Clinical pharmacists, social workers, nutritionists, and behavioral health staff support PACTs.

Over the past two years, VA has bolstered its support to all medical centers to expand established PACTs. Since implementation began, the number of primary care patients has increased 12 percent, and the number of encounters with Veterans has increased 50 percent, primarily due to telehealth and group encounters. Communicating with healthcare professionals through secure electronic means has also increased. Overall, PACTs implementation has been associated with important utilization changes—fewer primary care patients are receiving care in urgent care settings (decreased 33 percent) and acute hospital admissions have decreased 12 percent due to improved care management and coordination from PACTs. Equally important, both rural and urban Veterans report a high level of satisfaction with VA services.

Learn more: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2540 ◆

