

Know · Learn · Connect

'Build Your Balance' Falls Prevention

Campaign Toolkit



September- November 2017

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‘Build Your Balance’ Falls Prevention campaign

The Stay On Your Feet® ‘Build Your Balance’ campaign (September-November), delivered by Injury Matters, promotes the importance of older adults building and maintaining balance to help prevent slips, trips and falls and to encourage confidence in independent living.

Know Injury has developed this toolkit to support Local Governments, community organisations and regional services to participate in the ‘Build Your Balance’ campaign, from September through to November 2017. Know Injury invites you to raise community awareness of how older adults can build their balance for falls prevention, by posting on social media and sending a press release to your local newspaper. You’ll find everything you need to get started within this toolkit.

What can Local Governments and organisations do to get involved in the ‘Build Your Balance’ Falls Prevention campaign?

Using social media

The ‘Build Your Balance’ falls prevention campaign provides a great opportunity to get active on your social media accounts and help generate awareness within your community of how older adults can build their balance to help prevent a fall. In the following pages, Know Injury has provided social media templates for Twitter and Facebook, a blog post template, and a media release for Local Governments and organisations to use throughout the campaign.

Stay On Your Feet® Facebook account (<https://www.facebook.com/stayonyourfeet/>) will be actively promoting the ‘Build Your Balance’ campaign from September to November. Consider sharing their posts or posting on the page about your upcoming events and stalls or photos of your event.

How else can your Local Government or organisation get involved?

Awareness events and activities in the workplace or community

- Set up a stall or stand in your reception area, local shopping centre, weekend farmers market or home and community care day centres.
- Display posters and distribute education resources (freely available through www.injurymattersquickmail.com.au)
- Use local statistics on the incidence of falls to raise awareness at events, on social media or at education sessions (contact Know Injury).
- Contact local radio or newspapers. Ask your communication team to promote activities, particularly on social media.
- Download the Build Your Balance toolkit to run an education session about improving balance for falls prevention at your local seniors centres, lifestyle villages or community care centres or organise a free Stay On Your Feet® peer education session.
- Host a balance class, like Tai Chi at your local recreation centre or park.

Accessing local falls data

Is your Local Government or organisation interested in obtaining local data on the incidence of falls in your community? If yes, Know Injury can provide you with information on the number of

hospitalisations and deaths due to falls in your Local Government area or health region. Contact the Know Injury team at info@knowinjury.org.au or 9420 7212 for more information.

Communication templates

Facebook templates

Use the following templates to develop Facebook posts to promote the importance of building your balance for falls prevention:

1. Improving your balance is the best way to prevent falls. Activities such as Tai Chi, tennis or lawn bowls are great for building your balance. <Link to recreation centre/programs in local area>
2. Balance is important to help you stay on your feet. Build Your Balance with safe activities that use your muscles to keep you steady. Start to challenge your balance with safe and simple exercises. Progress gradually and increase the difficulty as your balance improves. For more information, see <https://www.stayonyourfeet.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Balance-flyer-front.jpg>
3. Balance is important to help you stay on your feet. Aim for 30 minutes of strength and balance exercises each day to prevent slips, trips and falls.
4. How good is your balance? Try this simple exercise to test:
 - Hold on to support and stand up tall with your feet together
 - Hold for 10 seconds
 - Repeat twiceWant to make it harder?
 - Remove your hand from support
 - Close your eyes
5. Falls don't have to be a part of getting older, they are preventable. Building your balance with simple exercises from your GP, physio or local exercise class, will help you maintain your balance and stay independent.

Twitter templates

Use the following templates to develop twitter posts to promote the importance of building your balance for falls prevention:

1. Tai Chi, tennis & lawn bowls are great for improving balance to help you #stayonyourfeet
2. Good balance will help you #stayonyourfeet and prevent slips, trips and falls
3. Moving your body & completing balance exercises daily can improve your overall physical, mental & social health #stayonyourfeet
4. Older people can maintain and even regain their strength, balance and mobility by staying active and healthy #stayonyourfeet
5. Use the Stay On Your Feet eDirectory to find a class in <your area> that includes balance exercises– <https://goo.gl/i462xK>

Media release template for your local newspaper

Media release

Date

Build your balance to stay independent

Injury Matters' program Stay On Your Feet® is launching a new campaign 'Build Your Balance' to help older adults stay healthy and independent by preventing falls. The campaign runs from 1 September – 30 November.

Balance is essential for carrying out everyday activities such as walking, getting out of a chair, bending down to put on shoes and shopping for groceries.

Mayor XXXX said that increasing age, inactivity, disease and muscle weakness can impair balance abilities.

"I spend a lot of time in our community talking to people over the age of 60, and I know that the most important thing to them is staying independent, and staying in their own homes," s/he said.

"Improving your balance will help keep you on your feet and reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls, which in turn means you can avoid a hospital visit, and stay independent,"

Injury Matters' Chief Executive Sandy Lukjanowski said building your balance was a key way for older adults to stay on their feet and help protect themselves from a fall.

"Falls don't have to be a part of getting older, they are preventable", she said

"You can reduce your risk of having a fall by improving your balance, along with strengthening your legs, and removing trip hazards from your home,"

Simple exercises that challenge your balance, or adding balance exercises to your current fitness routine, can be beneficial. Older adults are encouraged to talk to their GP and physios for suggested exercises, or contact Stay On Your Feet® for a free copy of the Build Your Balance exercise video or information about activity ideas and exercise classes in their area.

Injury Matters coordinates Stay On Your Feet® which promotes how to keep active and alert through the Move Improve Remove campaigns and prevent slips, trips and falls.

For more information visit www.stayonyourfeet.com.au or call 1300 30 35 40.

ENDS

Media contact:
(Insert media contact)

Blog post template

Building balance is the key to avoiding falls and staying independent

Balance is a key part of our daily lives that we often take for granted. It's essential for carrying out everyday activities such as walking, getting out of a chair, bending down to put on shoes and shopping for groceries.

Increasing age, inactivity, disease and muscle weakness can impair balance abilities, but being proactive and taking steps to improve your balance will help keep you on your feet and reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls, allowing you to stay independent.

Starting simple exercises that challenge your balance, or adding balance exercises to your current fitness routine can be beneficial. Tai Chi, tennis and lawn bowls are all great activities because they involve weight transfer and challenging your balance as you move. Older adults are encouraged to talk to their GP and physios for ideas on which exercises would be suitable.

To help 'Build Your Balance', Stay on Your Feet® encourages older adults to:

- Challenge their balance daily
- Do strength and balance exercises for 30 minutes each day to help prevent falls
- Add balance challenging exercises to the activities they are already doing
- Speak to a fitness professional, physiotherapist or GP about trying balance exercises.

Organisations working to prevent falls in older adults

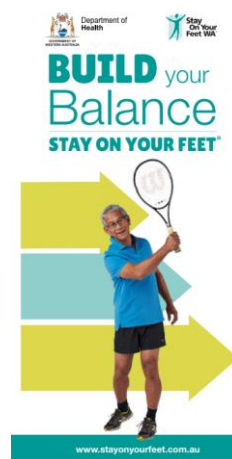
Injury Matters

Injury Matters aims to empower, influence and collaborate with the WA community to prevent injury and support recovery, because it believes all Western Australians can live life uninterrupted by injury.

Injury Matters provides the Stay On Your Feet® program, to prevent falls among older adults. Stay On Your Feet® promotes falls prevention through the Move, Improve, Remove campaigns, which encourage older adults to Move Your Body, Improve Your Health and Remove Hazards. Stay On Your Feet® educates community members, health professionals and community workers on how to keep active and alert to prevent slips, trips and falls and to encourage confidence in independent living.

Resources

Stay On Your Feet® provides a selection of free resources including flyers, pamphlets and posters, which can be ordered through their [website](#) and distributed to your community through events/stalls or presentations.



Community Presentations

Why not host a Move Your Body community presentation for older adults in your community Stay On Your Feet® delivers free community presentations through their team of peer volunteers. ? To book your free presentation contact the Stay On Your Feet® team at 1300 30 35 40. Alternatively, you can download the Build Your Balance Educator Toolkit and deliver the presentation yourself. The toolkit comes complete with session plans, activities, resources and presentation notes.

[Download the toolkit here.](#)

Stay On Your Feet® will release a Build Your Balance video for the campaign launch on September 1st. Visit their website www.stayonyourfeet.com.au to order or download.

Council of the Ageing (COTA)

The Council of the Ageing WA works towards an equitable, just and inclusive society in which older people can flourish.

COTA delivers Living Longer Living Stronger™ classes across Western Australia. Living Longer Living Stronger™ is an evidence-based program that encourages and supports change in the health and fitness sectors to achieve improved health, quality of life and fitness for people aged over 50 years. To find out more visit the [COTA website.](#)

Additional Background Information

What is a fall?

“A fall is an event that results in a person coming to rest inadvertently on the ground or floor or other lower level (1)”.

What is balance?

Balance is the ability to maintain the body’s centre of mass relative to its base of support, such as staying upright and steady when stationary or during movement (2).

Why are falls an issue?

Falls are the leading cause of injury requiring hospitalisation in Australia (3). In 2012 in Western Australia there were 16,306 fall-related hospitalisations and in 2015, 306 fall-related deaths (3,4).

The highest number of fall-related fatalities and hospitalisations occurred in the 65 years plus age group, with one in ten bed days spent in hospital for this age group being directly attributable to a fall-related injury (3,5). Even more concerning, between 2003 and 2012 in Western Australia the rate of falls increased across all age groups, most noticeably among those 65 years and older (3).

In 2012, falls cost the Western Australian community \$2.2 billion dollars (3). This includes costs associated with presentations at emergency departments, hospital admissions, care aids, emergency transport and indirect costs such as long term care, loss of paid productivity and quality of life lost. The average cost of a fall injury during 2012 was \$134,379 (3).

Between 2010 and 2014 in Western Australia, 55.5% of falls hospitalisations were female (5). Aboriginal people were also over-represented. Aboriginal people make up 3.8% of the population, however between 2008 and 2012, 5.5% of falls hospitalisations were Aboriginal people (5).

After a fall, older adults may experience serious consequences including functional decline, long term disability, poorer quality of life and increased morbidity (6). Older adults may also experience psychological difficulties including the fear of falling, loss of self-efficacy, activity avoidance and loss of self-confidence (7). A serious fall can result in the loss of independence and early admission to residential aged care (8).

Falls prevention, balance and exercise

Balance is the biggest risk factor for a fall, with one quarter of falls amongst older adults being caused by poor balance and changes to their walking style (9). Balance plays a significant role in preventing falls and is essential to everyday activities such as walking, getting out of bed, bending over to put on shoes, driving a car and retrieving mail. However, as people age they may experience increased risk factors that inhibit and negatively impact their balance such as changes in cognitive functioning, impaired vision, low blood pressure, decreased reaction time, side effects from medications and declines in muscle and strength (2,10,11). Muscle strength steadily starts to decline after the age of 40 years and then accelerates after 65-70 years (12). Older adults who experience balance or gait deficits, mobility limitations or muscle weakness are 3-5 times more likely to fall than individuals without these impairments (9).

Exercise has been reported as the most effective strategy for reducing falls in older adults (13). Exercise that focuses on building strength and balance has been shown to be effective in reducing muscle loss, increasing muscle strength, building endurance, improving gait and balance and improving mood (13). To reduce the risk of falls, it has been recommended that older adults exercise for a minimum of three hours per week and include balance components that are progressively challenging (including strength, flexibility and endurance) (14). Stay on Your Feet® encourages older adults to:

- Challenge their balance daily
- Do strength and balance exercises for 30 minutes each day to help prevent falls
- Add balance challenging exercises to the activities they are already doing
- Speak to a fitness professional, physiotherapist or GP about trying balance exercises.

Know Injury

Know Injury provides knowledge, training, resources, and networking opportunities aimed at preventing injuries in Western Australia. To do this, Know Injury works with Local Governments, health workers, not-for-profit and community organisations to Know, Learn and Connect:

- **Know** about when, where, why and to whom injuries occur
- **Learn** how to adopt a public health approach to preventing injuries
- **Connect** with other people and organisations working to prevent injuries in Western Australia

Know Injury is provided by Injury Matters and funded by the State Government through the Department of Health.

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