

This Could Be the Game Changer

Sadly, over the last several weeks, we have seen multiple residents fall at home, with three of these incidents leading to serious injuries. I'm sure long time Lathrop residents can trace the life course of many of their neighbors back to falls. Those of you who have experienced a fall know the impact on your mobility, your independence and your outlook. A fall can be the game changer! Increased fall risk is part of aging, but falls needn't be. As with so many aspects of our health it's about doing all we can to reduce that risk.

Here are some reminders to keep in mind:

- Most importantly, **keep active**, which for many probably means **get active**. This of course means within your current limitations. The goal is to maintain and if possible improve lower body strength and overall balance.
- Take care of chronic conditions. Blood pressure changes, poorly controlled blood sugars, or unmanaged pain all add to risk of falls.
- Know your medications and make sure you are taking them correctly.
- Make sure you are getting enough sleep (this is a topic in itself!)
- Attend to changes in urinary pattern or signs of respiratory infection. Weakness can mean wobbliness...a fall might just be an accident, but often it is a sign of some underlying issue.
- Keep up with regular eye exams.
- Remove clutter and keep passageways clear. Add safety supports where needed.

This list could go on. If you are feeling that your mobility has become a problem, a single call from your physician could set you up with a round of physical therapy, for which Medicare will likely pay. (it's much cheaper than repairing you after a fall!) They can provide you with a simple home exercise program. If you feel steady now, reinvest that capacity in a new **commitment to regular weight bearing exercise**. This is the true core of your long term care insurance policy.

We are lucky to have Cooley Dickinson VNA returning with their grant funded falls prevention program, scheduled for six sessions starting October 23rd at the Meeting House in Northampton. Watch for sign-ups.