



NORTHUMBERLAND HILLS
HOSPITAL

Community Care
Northumberland

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seniors can prevent falls—and serious injury—by taking some simple precautions and staying active

NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, Tuesday, December 9th, 2014—The Ontario Medical Association has estimated that “Every 10 minutes in Ontario, at least one person over the age of 65 visits an emergency room because of a fall. Unintentional falls are the leading cause of injury among those over 65, making up 59% of emergency department visits and 79% of all hospitalizations for this age group in Ontario,”¹

The team in NHH’s Emergency Department sees many seniors this time of year, and throughout the winter months, after they’ve suffered a fall.

“Falls can be incredibly disastrous for older adults,” says Geriatric Emergency Management Nurse Sarah Gibbens. “The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that 1 in 3 seniors fall each year, and 40% of those falls result in a hip fracture.² When I ask our Emergency Department patients how they fell, I’m often told: ‘Oh, I am just getting old!’ Older adults are more susceptible to falling but, by taking some simple precautions, we can minimize the risk and, more often than not, prevent a serious fall.”

As we move once again into Canada’s winter months, fall prevention is on everyone’s minds. It is more than just ice that can cause a slip, though, as those who care for elderly patients know well.

Falls are caused by a number of factors. New health challenges like pneumonia, bladder infections, vision and hearing problems, or heart problems can increase one’s risk of falls. Other causes could be slippery floors, loose rugs or clutter in household hallways, improper footwear, not wearing glasses, not using the right walking equipment, and the use of some medications.

“Even a fear of falling can cause falls,” says Gibbens. “It’s the use it or lose it principle. If someone is afraid of falling, they gradually become less likely to get up and move. In time, the leg muscles weaken quickly, making a fall more likely.”

Gibbens reminds all of the older patients she sees that many falls can be prevented by making small changes to their home environment. Remove loose rugs from the floor, incorporate non-slip surfaces in the bathtub or shower, and clear the stairs and hallways. She also encourages them to be alert for changes in balance or dizziness caused by the

medications they are on, and review with a pharmacist and their family physician any concerns to minimize them wherever possible.

Gibbens is also a strong advocate for regular mobility. “Always incorporate walking and/or activity into your daily routine,” she advises, pointing those who have internet access to the very effective video from Toronto’s Dr. Mike Evans, *23 and 1/2 hours*, which prescribes simple, regular walking as “the single best thing we can do for our health!” To view the video on YouTube, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HIGo>

Among Gibbens’s roles in the NHH Emergency Department is linking local seniors and their families to programs, including exercise classes, in the community. At the top of her list is a popular offering from the team at Community Care Northumberland. With classes offered in Cobourg, Colborne, Hastings, Port Hope and Campbellford, the course runs twice a week for 12 weeks. Each class is one hour in length, with half of the time dedicated to education (trip hazards, lighting recommendations, medication risks) and half on exercise.

“Participating in these free community exercise and falls prevention classes is a great opportunity for seniors to increase their independence and connections in the community. Strengthening our bodies and educating ourselves about the importance of exercise and fall prevention helps to improve our overall health and has been an identified need for seniors in Northumberland County,” said Trish Baird, Executive Director of Community Care Northumberland.

No referral for the free classes is required, but registration is necessary. To register, or get more information about an upcoming class near you, call Community Care Northumberland directly at 1-866-514-5774.

Inside NHH, the hospital’s Safe Mobility Committee is an interdisciplinary group including a senior and past patient of NHH, hospital staff, and professionals from the community setting. Its purpose is to widen the understanding of falls reduction and injury prevention, particularly in older adults.

“One of our biggest messages for preventing falls is encouraging safe walking while in the hospital and at home,” says Gibbens. “Walking keeps leg muscles strong and is a major factor in falls prevention! We will continue to work together with our patients, their families and our community agencies on our drive for fall and injury prevention.”

Contacts: Jennifer Gillard, Director, Communications and Community Engagement, NHH, jgillard@nhh.ca or 905-377-7757; Alicia Vandine, Regional Community Relations Coordinator, CCN, a.vandine@commcare.ca, or 1-866-514-5774.

About Northumberland Hills Hospital – Located approximately 100 kilometres east of Toronto, NHH delivers a broad range of acute, post-acute, outpatient and diagnostic services. Acute services include emergency and intensive care, medical/surgical care, and obstetrical care. Post-acute specialty services (PASS) include restorative care, rehabilitation and palliative care. Mental health care, chemotherapy, dialysis and 16 other ambulatory care clinics are offered on an outpatient basis through partnerships with regional centres and nearby specialists. NHH offers a full range of diagnostic services, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), computed tomography (CT) and

mammography. The hospital serves the catchment area of west Northumberland County. A mixed urban and rural population of approximately 60,000 residents, west Northumberland comprises the Town of Cobourg, the Municipality of Port Hope and the townships of Hamilton, Cramahe and Alnwick/Haldimand. NHH employs approximately 600 people and relies on the additional support provided by physicians and volunteers. NHH is an active member of the Central East Local Health Integration Network. For more information, please visit www.nhh.ca or follow us on Twitter [@NorHillsHosp](https://twitter.com/NorHillsHosp).

About Community Care Northumberland – Established in 1988, Community Care Northumberland strives to be the best, multi-service, volunteer-based community support organization in Northumberland County. Our over 900 regional volunteers enable clients to experience a higher quality of life by strengthening their connections with the community. They along with our professional staff accomplish this through the delivery of the following essential community support services:

- Community Diners
- Friendly Visiting
- Home at Last
- Home Help and Maintenance Programs
- Hospice Palliative Care Programs
- Meals on Wheels Programs
- Supports for Caregivers
- Telephone Security Checks
- Transportation Services including Accessible Transportation Options
- Wellness, Social and Recreational Programs

For more information about our services or to volunteer with Community Care Northumberland, please contact us at 866-514-5774 or visit us on-line at www.commcare.ca

References:

¹ Ontario Medical Association website, www.oma.org, as retrieved December 8, 2014 from <https://www.oma.org/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/HoldSteadyPreventFallsAmongSeniors.aspx>

² Public Health Agency of Canada website, www.publichealth.gc.ca, as retrieved December 8, 2014 from *Seniors Falls' in Canada, Second Report* http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/seniors_falls-chutes_aines/index-eng.php

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