

May is "Older Americans Month", a time to celebrate those who've made countless contributions to ensure a better life for future generations. This year's theme, "Safe today. Healthy tomorrow.", focuses on injury prevention and safety so we can keep our cherished elders around for as long as possible.

Older Americans are now more active and independent than ever. I'm sure you've heard, 60 is the new 50, 70's the new 60 and 80 -- well 80 just rocks. This kind of thinking keeps us young, but it can also be dangerous.

Older adults are at a much higher risk of unintentional injury, and even death, than the rest of the population. Each year, unintentional injuries in the older population result in at least 6 million medically treated injuries and more than 30,000 deaths. Many of these injuries might be prevented if the right safety precautions were taken.

Falling at home is the number one cause of injury for seniors. Here are some ways to prevent falls:

- Remove or secure throw rugs
- Improve lighting, especially near stairs
- Avoid using stools and ladders, move things within reach
- Install grab bars in the bathroom
- Use nonslip mats in the tub and shower
- Create a clear path through every room
- Stay active to improve strength and balance

Staying active is important for everyone, but even more so for seniors. Regular exercise such as walking, light yoga or water aerobics, will strengthen your body, improve balance and help protect your body from injuries.

Vision plays a big role in senior safety, from driving, to crossing the street, to properly reading prescription labels. For people 60 and older, an annual eye exam improves your chance of maintaining good eye health.

Celebrate "Older Americans" month by taking some precautions so you can truly enjoy your golden years!

"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter." - Mark Twain