

keep your balance – tips provided for fall prevention

Falls are the most common cause of injury in the United States, particularly among older adults. Whether it's a slip on wet or icy pavement or a trip on a rug or stairway, the risk of bruises, broken bones and back and head injuries is significant.

"Most people fall due of a lack of attention, rushing around or accidental situations, but some individuals are actually at greater risk for falling," said Joseph Caccavo, physical therapist at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation (www.kessler-rehab.com). "Older adults, as well as those with a history of low blood pressure, stroke or neurological disorders, vision deficits or balance problems, as well as those taking certain medications, all face greater challenges."

The good news is that there are ways to minimize the risk of falling by making simple changes around the home and workplace, and improving balance with proper training and exercise.

"Clutter is a way of life for many of us, but it's something we can control. Similarly, we have the tools to effectively evaluate and treat individuals who have balance disorders to help minimize their risk of

falling and optimize their quality of life," explained Kessler physical therapist Michelle O'Keefe. "In fact, the Department of Health and Human Services recommends that older adults include balance exercises as part of an overall fitness program."

Kessler's new Fall Prevention Program (www.kessler-rehab.com/programs/outpatient-services/falls.com) draws on the expertise and experience of an interdisciplinary team of licensed physical, occupational and speech therapists, including certified cognitive, vision and vestibular specialists, to determine fall risk and develop individualized treatment plans.

"Our goal is to help individuals maintain balance in their lives, at home, at work and at play," added Kessler occupational therapist Norma Glennon.

To help reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls and improve balance, Kessler Institute offers the following recommendations:

- Be sure flooring is in good condition and remove throw rugs.
- Clear stairs, hallways and rooms of clutter and other obstacles.
- Secure or remove any

electrical wires or cords.

- Make sure lighting is adequate both inside and outside the home – especially on stairways. Install automatic light sensors, timers or night lights.

- Place a telephone in each room or carry a cordless phone with you to avoid having to rush to answer a call.

- Avoid sitting in rockers, swivel chairs and chairs with wheels.

- Be sure railings and banisters are secure.

- Install hand rails or grip bars in showers and bathtubs and place non-slip strips or decals on the floor/tub. Also use a rubber-backed bath mat when you step out.

- Take extra precautions on uneven, wet, or icy pavements.

- Reduce attentional demands and focus on the activity at hand.

- Include balance exercises in your fitness regimen, such as one-leg stands and sit-to-stand exercises, as well as exercises to build ankle, leg, and hip strength.

Individuals who are experiencing problems with balance, dizziness or falling should be examined by a physician. For more information, visit www.kessler-rehab.com.

have all of the school districts in Columbia County.

The teens of Columbia County exhibit a different trend among tobacco use. In Columbia County 11 percent of eighth graders smoke (state rate is 9 percent) and 20 percent of 11th graders (state rate is 16 percent). This is an increase of one percent among eighth graders and a one percent decrease among 11th graders since 2009.

The report also highlights the cost of smoking. Columbia County residents spend \$14 million on medical care for tobacco-related illnesses every year. Statewide, tobacco users spend \$1.2 billion every year. Together with the indirect costs of lost productivity due to premature death, (reported at \$1.1

billion), the report estimates the total annual economic cost to Oregon due to tobacco at \$2.3 billion.

The total financial burden to Oregonians of each pack of cigarettes is \$13.27 according to the report.

The Columbia Health Coalition is seeking opportunities to improve healthy behaviors in Columbia County. If you have tobacco or smoke-free property, or would like assistance in creating a policy that works for you, contact Sherrie Ford at sford@chdpublichealth.com or call 503-397-4651, ext. 2021.

The Tobacco Quitline is a free coaching resource to help anyone quit, please call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or go to www.quitnow.met/oregon/.

\$48 million for health care exchange

Oregon Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden announced February 17 that Oregon will receive over \$48 million to pioneer a new online health care exchange that will allow Oregonians to compare, purchase, and enroll in private health insurance plans. State-based exchanges are a result of the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and allow individuals and small-business owners to pool their purchasing power to negotiate lower rates. The Oregon Health Authority estimates that 516,000 Medicaid clients and 277,000 commercial insurance consumers will use the Health Insurance Exchange to shop for and enroll in health coverage.

"Oregon has a reputation for innovation in health care. This grant is a vote of confidence in our state's leadership in developing the health information technology backbone needed to operate the exchange," Merkley said. "When completed, the exchange will help Oregonians compare private health insurance plans and enroll in the plan that best fits their situation as well as provide a template for other states to follow."

"Once again Oregon is at the forefront of healthcare innovation and they are being rewarded for it," Wyden said. "These funds will help the state build the technological infra-

structure they need to operate top flight healthcare exchanges that will provide high quality health care options for Oregon residents when the healthcare law goes on line in 2014. A program like this is also further proof that states should be encouraged to innovate now while the health care exchanges are being created, and be ready to hit the ground running in 2014 with something that works best for their residents."

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, other states receiving grants include Kansas, Maryland, New York, Oklahoma, Wisconsin and a multi-state consortia led by the University of Massachusetts Medical School.

Starting in 2014, exchanges will enable individuals and small employers to shop for, select, and enroll in high-quality, affordable private health plans that fit their individual needs at competitive prices. By providing a place for one-stop shopping, exchanges will make purchasing health insurance easier and more consumer-friendly.

Information on how much each state or consortium will receive and how each will use the grant funds is available at www.HealthCare.gov/news/factsheets/exchanges02162011a.html.

Report details Columbia County tobacco trends

Cigarette smoking is up slightly across the state, but has declined in Columbia County, the Oregon Health Authority reports.

The "2011 Oregon Tobacco Facts & Laws," says that 17.1 percent of adults smoked in Oregon in 2009, up from 15.7

percent in 2008. Smoking rates in Columbia County have decreased from 20 to 17.1 percent of the adult population.

"There is a lot more work to do, but it is nice to see some good news in this report," said Sherrie Ford, Tobacco Prevention and Education Coordinator for the Columbia Health District.

Both sets of statistics are part of an overall downward trend. Smoking has declined steadily since 1996, the first year the state began gathering data as part of the Tobacco Prevention and Education Program. The Oregon-wide smoking rate was 23.7 percent in 1996. The number of cigarettes consumed has dropped much faster. Since 1996, per capita cigarette consumption decreased 48 percent.

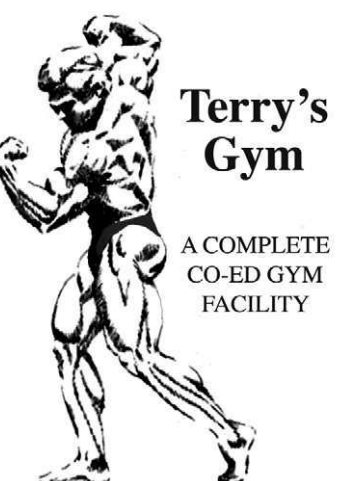
Tobacco is still the number

one cause of preventable death in Oregon, but tobacco-related deaths are also going down. Deaths declined from 93.6 per 100,000 people between 1996 and 2001, to 89.2 per 100,000 between 2002 and 2007, a 4.7 percent drop.

In Columbia County, 7,143 people regularly smoked cigarettes in 2009. The latest report says that 6,318 people regularly smoke cigarettes in the county.

Ford and other public health officials attribute the improvements in part to the Smoke-free Workplace Law that took effect in 2009.

"As smoking becomes less socially acceptable," Ford said, "people are more willing to institute non-smoking or tobacco-free policies." Columbia Community Mental Health adopted a tobacco free property, as



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