



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

**NORTH SUBURBAN
YMCA**
2705 Techny Road
Northbrook, IL 60062
www.nsymca.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Protect Loved Ones from Falls with Strategies from the North Suburban YMCA

In honor of National Falls Prevention Awareness Month, the North Suburban YMCA offers tips and programs to help residents avoid dangerous falls.

Northbrook, IL – September is National Falls Prevention Awareness Month, an opportunity to understand the risk factors and prevention strategies connected to falls by older adults. The North Suburban YMCA is joining the National Council on Aging and the [Falls Free Coalition](#) in September with targeted fall prevention programs to help raise awareness and keep seniors safe and active.

The Center for Disease Control estimates that each year, one out of four Americans aged 65 or older will suffer a fall. Many will suffer serious injuries; others will be left with a fear of falling that can cause them to limit physical activities. This leads to reduced mobility, which actually increases their risk of falling and also diminishes their quality of life. In addition, falls put an immense strain on the health care system, with the financial toll expected to reach \$67.7 billion by 2020.

The good news is that falls are preventable. With a focus on healthy aging, the NSYMCA is committed to helping older adults develop the skills and habits to proactively reduce their risk.

“Even older adults who are in good health can suffer a fall, and many families underestimate the risks and steps needed to prevent them,” says Karen Brownlee, Adult Program Coordinator at the NSYMCA. “Fortunately, community-based organizations like the Y are a great resource for any older adult, family member or caregiver who wants to learn what they can do to not only decrease the risk of a fall but improve overall health and well-being.”

The YMCA is hosting two special programs in September in support of Falls Prevention Awareness Month, in addition to the Y’s comprehensive range of regular fitness programs for older adults. All programs are held at the Y, 2705 Techny Road in Northbrook.

The first step to prevention is understanding risk. The NSYMCA is holding a special **Risk Assessment Event** on **Monday, September 24**. From 9:00am to 12:15pm, physical therapist Denise Schwartz will conduct one-on-one evaluations, including a series of questions and observations of mobility and balance. Participants will leave with a better understanding of their risk factors and ideas on how to improve their safety. The assessment is offered free of charge to the general public; pre-registration is required to Karen Brownlee at kbrownlee@nsymca.org. Older adults can also assess their fall risk by taking a simple test at ymca.net/fallsrisk. Through this assessment, individuals can learn how routine activities and other factors help determine their risk for falls.

In addition to assessing risk, the Y will host a **free workshop on improving balance** to reduce fall risk on **Thursday, September 27**. Mike O'Donnell, Project Manager for "A Matter of Balance" under contract with Rush University Medical Center, will discuss six steps anyone can take to reduce the risk for falls, and offer information about programs to improve balance and build confidence. The workshop begins at 11:15am and is free and open to the public.

The Y also offers specialized classes to improve the health and well being of older individuals, including Balance Improvement, Balance for Walking, and the new Enhance®Fitness Program. EnhanceFitness is a proven community-based senior fitness and arthritis management program that helps older adults become more active, energized, and empowered for independent living. Statistics show that 50% or more of EnhanceFitness participants improve their agility/dynamic balance as well as their upper and lower body strength. Details can be found in the YMCA Fall Program Guide, available at [NSYMCA.org](https://www.nsymca.org).

The CDC and YMCA suggest these basic lifestyle and safety changes to help reduce risk and prevent falls:

- Begin an exercise program to improve your leg strength & balance.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your medicines.
- Get annual eye check-ups and update your eyeglasses.
- Make your home safer by:
 - Removing clutter and tripping hazards
 - Putting railings on all stairs and adding grab bars in the bathroom
 - Installing proper lighting, especially on stairs.

The North Suburban YMCA offers a wide variety education, health, and social programs to enhance the lives of older adults in the community. To learn more, visit [NSYMCA.org](https://www.nsymca.org) or contact Karen Brownlee, kbrownlee@nsymca.org.



Photo Caption: Exercise classes for older adults help maintain strength and balance, reducing the risk of dangerous falls.

About the [North Suburban YMCA](#)

Celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2018/19, the North Suburban YMCA provides individuals in Northbrook and 15 surrounding communities with programs and tools that help them become healthier, more connected, and confident, ensuring that everyone, regardless of age, income, or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. The NSYMCA focuses on Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility and is a charitable organization, inclusive and welcoming to all in our community. Learn more at NSYMCA.org.