

Is Clutter Increasing Your Fall Risks at Home?

From the Northern Virginia Fall Prevention Coalition

Falls at home are the principal cause of nonfatal injuries and trauma-related hospitalizations in the United States today. Falls most occur in the home due to clutter such as, excessive items stacked on stairways or main entryways. Falling over clutter is especially compounded for those with mobility restrictions or visual impairment. Clutter is also a fire hazard, causing millions of dollars of damage annually; and, the reported deaths of people who cannot be saved due to avenues of possible escape being blocked by books, boxes, even clothes. Rescue personnel are also injured or killed when trying to enter a raging firestorm fueled by mountains of clutter.

The mission of the Northern VA Fall Prevention Coalition (NVFPC) is to work with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Virginia organizations, and individuals concerned with fall prevention and education. Our primary focus is to improve on the existing resources of public practitioners in the state, addressing the need for additional services. We conduct a series of informative seminars fulfilled by professional pharmacists, optometrists, caregivers, and other specialists serving the local community. By educating our state's aging populace brings not only positive social change; but, also a shift in daily routines for the quality of life.

Clutter and 'hoarding' can also be demonstrated by anyone that has collected an excessive amount of newspapers, magazines, old clothes, egg cartons, even the acquisition of cats and dogs. Why can't these folks dispose of these things? Frequently, they place a sentimental value on certain items as a remembrance of past 'hey-days', memories of loved ones who have passed away, a source of security, or even a substitution for love. Usually with an offer of assistance, these same 'hoarders' will welcome the company needed to weed through the disproportionate heaps and remove the clutter. And sometimes, it takes the efforts of a professional organizer. Target one area at a time, making the process smaller and not so overwhelming. Use these guidelines to help someone you love avoid falls over home clutter:

- Make use of any recycling bags or boxes for financial records that are no longer essential and can be shredded.
- Use filing boxes for confidential papers that need to be retained and stored out of the traffic areas of the home.
- Have un-used or unnecessary items taken to charities or church bazaars for sale.
- Gift sentimental treasures to relatives, friends or worldwide organizations that will appreciate the memories and history associated with them.

For more information on our upcoming events and fall prevention information, visit NVFPC.org.

Falls are not an inevitable part of aging. Falls are preventable!

We look forward to you joining us at our next seminar.

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