

In-home safety evaluation can reduce risk of falls

Falls are one of the leading causes of injury and death among older people. Unsteadiness can be found in 12 percent of those under the age of 70; 30 percent of people over 75; and 46 percent of people over the age of 85. Falls by seniors have many causes; they are not solely because of aging. One can reduce fall risks by exercising regularly; having a healthcare provider review medications; getting a vision check-up; and making the home safer.

About half of all falls occur in the home. As we age, or have health changes, we rarely consider changes we can make in our homes which could reduce the risk of falling. An in-home safety evaluation can be the first step in reducing fall risks.

Thriving at Home, a company based in Medford, MA, can help seniors and their families understand potential dangers in the home through an In-Home Safety Evaluation. A thorough evaluation of each room in a client's home is done to uncover safety risks. Once the evaluation has been completed, teaching and incorporat-

ing new techniques into daily routines can help reduce falls and avoid other dangers.

Thayer McCain, MA, OTR/L, owner of Thriving at Home, says, "Adaptive techniques, assistive devices, or minor environmental changes alleviate challenging circumstances. By working closely with families and caregivers, Thriving at Home empowers clients to reach the optimal level of daily performance and satisfaction while holding fast to a sense of self-worth. Coming up with creative and inexpensive solutions is our passion." Even slightly rearranging the living space or raising the couch three inches can have a dramatic impact on safety.

Most falls occur on steps or stairs, in the bathroom or kitchen and in areas with poor lighting. Some of the suggestions made by Thriving at Home include installing handrails in the bathroom, placing a rubber mat in front of the kitchen sink to avoid slipping on water, making sure stairs and hallways have bright lights, and marking the edges of stairs.

Rosaleen Doherty, vice president of Right at Home, an in-home care and assistance agency serving the North Shore, notes, "Our clients use our supportive services to stay independently in their homes. Getting an In-Home Safety Evaluation can help assess what changes can be made to maintain safety and prolong independence. Reducing the risk of falls can be one of the key elements to staying independent."

To inquire about a Home Safety Assessment, Thriving at Home can be reached at 781.306.9727. Other services offered by Thriving at Home are occupational therapy in an in-home setting, life skills education, low vision alternatives, environmental accessibility, professional trainings, sales and referrals for assistive devices. Services can be paid for through traditional Medicare, private pay and other insurance.

*Thayer McCain MA, OTR/L / Thriving at Home serves Boston, the North Shore, and Metro-West.
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