The ABCs of staying on your feet

Sydney Local Health District experts are going back to the ABCs for April Falls Day (April 1) to remind people about the importance of keeping older people on their feet.

Staying active (A), being careful (B), and maintaining adequate calcium (C) and Vitamin D levels are the best ways to prevent serious injury from falls.

SLHD Falls Prevention Coordinator Amanda Yates said falls can be devastating for people aged 65 years or over, and sometimes even fatal.

“Even a small slip can lead to serious injury that results in loss of independence or requires hospitalisation, but there are precautions that can be taken” Ms Yates said.

“Staying active by getting half an hours gentle exercise most days of the week is an easy and important way to reduce the risk of falling as it increases bone strength, flexibility and balance.

“Ensuring adequate calcium and Vitamin D levels also helps to maintain bone health” she said.

“It is also important that older people wear non-slip shoes, and keep homes well lit and free of spills, obstacles or other hazards.

Other things you can do to help prevent falls include:

- Get regular eyesight checks
- Take your time when getting up from sitting or lying down
- If you have a walking aid, always use it when walking
- Ask your health professional to develop a falls prevention care plan suited to your needs

Sydney Local Health District will run several activities during April Falls month, including;

- An information display in the main foyer at RPA Hospital from April 2nd to April 4th.
- A Tai Chi demonstration and Falls Forum at Concord Repatriation General Hospital on April 4th. Staff will also wear green armbands in recognition of falls prevention.
- Balmain Hospital staff will present a series of community forums on fall prevention strategies. Safety messages will also be displayed in the hospital foyer.

Background information:

- More than 1 in 4 people aged 65 or over have at least one fall per year and many fall more than once.
- Falls lead to approximately 27,000 hospitalisations in NSW each year and at least 400 deaths in people aged 65 or over.
- SLHD has developed a unique Falls Champion Program in recent years. More than 200 nurses and other staff have been trained to lead falls prevention programs.