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Falls We Can Beat with Stay on Your Feet

FALLING is not a normal part of aging, yet one in three people aged 65 years or over will fall each year. Hazards inside or outside the home as well as in the community such as roadways, shopping centres, parks and footpaths can all cause falls.

Amy Messer, Occupational Therapist with Avon and Central Wheatbelt Primary Health Service, stated, "Around 28% of falls among older people occur in the bedroom, 21% in the family or living room and 13% in the kitchen. 10% happen just outside the home, near the back or front doors. The other 17% of falls occur in the laundry, hall or other places around the home."

Last month Amy spoke to the Northam Day Hospital Falls Group about common hazards and how to reduce the risk of falling by removing possible hazards. This group is for people who have fallen in the last six months and would like information on how to reduce their risk of falling again.

The group stated that having a fall takes away your confidence and they would like to warn others in the community about common hazards to prevent them from falling and losing their confidence.

"Be careful of gravel," the group said. "Five out of eight of us here today slipped on gravel. Also lifted pavement can be a trip hazards. We have learnt that you can buy strips of grip for stairs, which is a good idea."

Another message the group wanted to pass on to others was to remove clutter from the floors in your house. "Remove mats with curly edges or a use mat with rubber backing. Clark Rubber in Midland is a good place to go for them. Make sure you're wearing safe footwear too; that is a big part of preventing falls."

For information on identifying and removing hazards in and around the home call the Occupational Therapy Department at Northam Hospital on 9690 1320. For information on home aids visit the Independent Living Centre's website www.ilcaustralia.org.