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## Foods for Fall Risk Reduction

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Food may not be the first thing you think about with fall prevention/fall risk reduction. But maintaining a healthy diet can help keep your bones and muscles strong so that your chances of falling are lowered. Each year, 1 in 3 people over 65 fall. Many falls go unreported, so this number may be higher. In order to be part of the group that doesn't fall, eating a balanced and healthy diet is important.

September 19-25 is *Fall Prevention Awareness Week*. The Down with Falls Coalition, a collaboration of health professionals, government agencies, and community organizations, will be out in the community during the week presenting fall prevention information at various locations. Call the Orange County Office on Aging at **1-800-510-2020** for a schedule of activities during the week.

Eating a balanced diet, drinking enough water, eating regular meals and snacks to keep blood sugar level and maintaining a healthy weight to prevent chronic conditions are all things that can lower your fall risk.

Include these vitamins and nutrients in your fall prevention diet:

- **Protein.** The leading cause of falls is muscle weakness. Maintain strong muscles by eating enough protein and being physically active. For older adults, your daily protein target (in grams) should be half your weight (in pounds). This includes lean meats, beans, low-fat dairy and fortified breads and cereals.
- **Calcium.** Calcium helps you maintain strong bones and ward off osteoporosis. Many fractures occur as a result of a fall, so stronger bones are less likely to break. Good sources of calcium include low-fat dairy products, dark green, leafy vegetables and foods fortified with calcium, such as orange juice, cereals, and breads.
- **Vitamin D.** Several studies indicate that Vitamin D supplements lower a person's risk of falling. The vitamin helps your body absorb calcium and helps strengthen muscles. Sunlight exposure is the best way to get adequate Vitamin D, however fortified milk and orange juice, salmon, and tuna are food sources of Vitamin D. As a person ages, daily Vitamin D recommendations increase. Speak to your doctor about testing your Vitamin D levels tested if you are concerned that your levels are low.
- **Carotenoids.** Vision problems are often a cause of falling, so Lutein and Vitamin A are important to keeping the eyes healthy. Spinach, egg yolks, carrots, and leafy green vegetables are excellent sources of these substances.

Call the Orange County Office on Aging's Information Specialists at **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** to request a fall prevention packet (home safety checklists, medication charts, brochures) and learn about local resources or the Down with Falls Coalition. The Office on Aging Information and Assistance Specialists also have information on all programs and services for older adults in Orange County, including in-home assistance, transportation, caregiver support, counseling and meal programs.