

Provider Update

Encourage Exercise to Prevent Falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury in older adults. Each year, more than one-third of U.S. adults 65 and older experience a fall and, in more than 20 percent of those cases, the falls lead to injuries like joint problems, bone fractures and brain trauma.¹ Recovery can be difficult and, in many cases, falls lead to a decline in independence and in overall health.²

Poor eyesight, dizziness caused by medication and tripping hazards in the home are common reasons for falls. Many times, however, falls are simply caused by imbalance or a lack of strength. Some people who fall, even if they are not injured, develop a fear of falling, causing them to limit their activities, which in turn increases their actual risk of falling. It's just one more reason to emphasize the benefits of leading an active, healthy lifestyle at any age.

Exercise can help reduce the risk of falling by

- improving balance and strength
- decreasing the need for medication that affects balance
- increasing the confidence needed to live an active lifestyle, which reduces the risk of falling

As well, regular physical activity makes bones stronger so they're less likely to break in the event of a fall, or heal faster if they do break.

Prescribe an exercise program to build strength, improve balance and increase confidence

The facts are decisive, but convincing older patients to adopt an exercise program can be challenging. **Healthways SilverSneakers® Fitness** program, included as a benefit for your Amerigroup Community Care patients at **no extra cost**, makes it easier to turn a medical recommendation into a reality. As you advise patients to “eat right and exercise,” you can direct them to a comprehensive program that provides encouragement, direction and support every step of the way. With more than 2 million members, SilverSneakers is the nation's leading physical activity program designed exclusively for Medicare members.

- SilverSneakers members have access to **more than 11,000 fitness locations** nationwide (including Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico), where they can use all basic amenities and take SilverSneakers group fitness classes led by certified instructors specially trained in older-adult fitness. They can use any location any time they want, so even when traveling they can still work out.



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- In addition, SilverSneakers **FLEX™** offers classes such as Latin dance, tai chi, walking groups and yoga in members' neighborhoods – local parks, recreation centers, medical campuses and adult-living communities. FLEX participants can attend their favorite SilverSneakers fitness location concurrently.
- For members who can't get to a SilverSneakers location or FLEX class, **SilverSneakers Steps®** offers a choice of four fitness kits for at-home use – general fitness, strength, walking or yoga.
- The SilverSneakers member **website** offers members tools to assess their health and track their activity, fitness advice, meal plans and downloadable health recipes, and connection with the SilverSneakers online community for additional support.

SilverSneakers members have the tools and support they need to improve strength, balance and coordination, and the confidence to continue being active. In fact, SilverSneakers members report experiencing fewer falls than older adults nationally. Among Amerigroup members, 15 percent reported having a fall in 2013, compared to 26 percent of older adults nationally. And only 11 percent of members reported having to be hospitalized compared to 17 percent of national older adults.³

Please encourage your patients to take advantage of this valuable benefit. To learn more, visit **silversneakers.com** or contact Stephanie Williams at 678.458.6371 (stephanie.williams@healthways.com). Staff trainings and SilverSneakers marketing materials are available for your office.

1. <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>
2. <http://stopfalls.org/what-is-fall-prevention/fp-basics/>
3. SilverSneakers Annual Member Survey, 2013.

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Amerivantage is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract and a contract with the Georgia Medicaid program. Enrollment in Amerivantage depends on contract renewal.

