

## SLIPS, TRIPS, AND NEAR MISSES: HOW TO KEEP YOUR BALANCE AND REDUCE THE RISK OF FALLS

by Andi Baker, RN, Nurse Manager, LifePath



*Healthy Living workshops from LifePath, such as the one shown here, may help you reduce your risk of falls. The Matter of Balance workshop emphasizes practical coping strategies to manage our fall concerns. The next workshop starts in October. Learn more by contacting the Healthy Living Program at LifePath: 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259. Or go online to [LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops](http://LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops).*

mobility devices, home hazards, and chronic conditions such as arthritis, diabetes, stroke, Parkinson's disease, dementia, and incontinence.

The National Council on Aging suggests "6 Steps to Prevent a Fall":

1. **Find a good balance and exercise program.** LifePath offers free Healthy Living workshops, including "A Matter of Balance" fall prevention classes. Call us for more information at 413-773-5555 or toll-free 1-800-732-4636 or visit [LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops](http://LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops).

2. **Talk to your healthcare provider.** Request a fall risk assessment. Share your history of recent falls, slips, trips, or near misses.
3. **Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.** Take medications only as prescribed and discuss any troublesome side effects.
4. **Get your vision and hearing checked annually.**
5. **Keep your home safe.** Improving lighting, removing tripping hazards, and installing grab bars and handrails are important safety measures. The AARP website provides a handy "Caregiving Checklist" for fall prevention measures in and around the home.
6. **Talk to your family members.** Enlist the help of family in taking the steps mentioned above.

The National Council on Aging annually recognizes the first day of fall, this year September 22, as Fall Prevention Awareness Day. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one third of people 65 and older fall each year. Notably, less than half of the Medicare beneficiaries who fell in the previous year talked to their healthcare provider about it.

While conducting home visits, LifePath case managers and nurses routinely question consumers and their caregivers about recent falls. Sometimes the consumer is reluctant to characterize an event as a fall, describing a "near miss" or, "I tripped but landed in the chair, so it wasn't a fall." The individual's self-definition of what constitutes a fall may impact his or her likelihood of reporting events to medical providers and willingness to consider fall prevention measures.

The Fall Prevention Center of Excellence of the University of Southern California advises: "First a person needs to understand what may put them at risk for falling. Some risks can be reduced. Medical providers can help to identify risks and develop a plan. Specific physical activity can reduce fall risk by increasing balance and mobility skills. Also changes to the home and community environment can reduce hazards and help support a person in completing daily activities. While this is not a comprehensive list of fall prevention strategies, it's a good place to start."

Common fall risk factors include: fear of falling or having fallen before, gait and balance problems, use of psychoactive medications, poor vision, muscle weakness, postural dizziness, improper use of

## DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SHINE?

As a reader of *The Good Life*, you've surely seen and read a handful of the "SHINE" articles that appear monthly on these pages. You may have found the information helpful in furthering your understanding of the complicated healthcare system. But SHINE is much more than a written resource – it's a comprehensive program that can help you in ways you may not even have known about.

**"Anyone and everyone on Medicare can use SHINE services. It is also a great resource for those who are getting ready to retire and participate in Medicare."**

SHINE Program Director, Lorraine York-Edberg. When you contact SHINE, you can request to meet a Counselor who represents your community in-person at a convenient location or simply consult with them over the phone.

### How could SHINE help me?

SHINE counselors can answer your questions related to Medicare, Medicaid, prescriptions, insurance forms, One Care, other health insurance options, and more. This free assistance is provided to you from

an unbiased, trained counselor who holds your best interests at heart.

### What is SHINE, anyway?

SHINE stands for "Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone." The program offers health insurance-related resource information, education, and assistance. Anyone and everyone on Medicare can use SHINE services. It is also a great resource for those who are getting ready to retire and participate in Medicare. This is a free service, though contributions are welcome and will go a long way to help support this vital program.

The SHINE Program also hosts quarterly seminars called, "I am new to Medicare, what are my options?" Contact Lorraine York-Edberg at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or [lyork-edberg@LifePathMA.org](mailto:lyork-edberg@LifePathMA.org) for more information.

### If I contact SHINE, who would help me?

The SHINE Program is supported by trained, volunteer SHINE Counselors, overseen by the Western Massachusetts Regional

Ready to get in touch? Learn more about the SHINE Program or find a SHINE Counselor in your area by calling 800-732-4636, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Read more at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

## NEED HELP FIXING UP YOUR HOME TO AGE IN PLACE? HERE'S WHERE TO LOOK

Do you need modifications to your home to help you age in place? Maybe a ramp or a first floor bathroom would help you stay in your home as your needs change. Or perhaps you are in need of a repair? After all the rain we had in August, maybe you have a leaky roof. It could be that your septic system has suddenly and unexpectedly failed.

For homeowners in need of some help affording these types of home repairs and modifications, the Benefits Counseling Program at LifePath can help you find resources to help repair, modify, and improve your home.

Our volunteer benefits counselors can provide hands-on assistance with the application process for any of the home repair and modification agencies mentioned below. Our goal is your goal: to successfully navigate the application process, thus enabling residents to live safely and independently in their own homes and communities.

What resources help with home repairs and modifications?

The USDA has a single family housing repair program, the 504 Home Repair program, which provides loans to very-low-income homeowners to repair or modernize their homes and provides grants to very-low-income elder homeowners to remove health and safety hazards. To qualify, the homeowner must occupy the house and have an income below 50 percent of the area median income. For grants, the homeowner must be age 62 or older and unable to repay a repair loan. The maximum loan is \$20,000 and the maximum grant is \$7,500. The total lifetime assistance available through the Section 504 program is \$27,500, which could consist of a combination loan and grant. To get started in our area, homeowners are asked to call the USDA office in Hadley at (413) 585-1000 ext.4.

The Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) is state-funded and loans up to \$30,000 to finance modifications to the primary residence of a frail elder or any household member with disabilities. The disabilities need not be physical. Income limits are based on the Boston area, which means that most Western Massachusetts homeowners borrow at 0% interest and are not obligated to repay

**“Our volunteer benefits counselors can provide hands-on assistance with the application process for any of the home repair and modification agencies mentioned below. Our goal is your goal: to successfully navigate the application process, thus enabling residents to live safely and independently in their own homes and communities.”**

the loan until the property is sold or the title is transferred. Borrowers must submit a statement from a professional who will describe the kinds of limitations the person is subject to. Examples of projects funded through HMLP include ramps and lifts, hardwired alarm systems, fencing, sensory spaces, and accessible bathrooms and kitchens. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is the “provider agency” for HMLP in Franklin County. More information and an application can be obtained by calling Shirley Stephens at (413) 781-6045. If you live in a North Quabbin town, contact Lovette Chislom at (978) 630-6725.

Currently, Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) is administering housing rehab programs on behalf of 25 towns in Franklin County. The program provides

homeowners with interest-free loans in the form of a 0% Deferred Payment Loan (DPL) up to \$35,000. Mortgages will be enforced through a recorded mortgage lien on the property and are due and payable at sale or transfer of the property. Work that may be addressed through this program includes: electrical, plumbing, structural repairs, accessibility modifications, septic repair or replacement, heating repair or replacement, roofing, foundation, doors, wells, windows, and more. Income level limits apply. To learn more, contact Jen Morrow at (413) 863-9781 ext. 137. Residents of Greenfield can access similar services through the Greenfield Planning Department by calling (413) 772-1548.

Contact the Benefits Counseling Program at LifePath for assistance. In addition to the above, volunteer benefits counselors help elders with applications for fuel assistance and food stamps (SNAP) and can provide information on utility discounts, tax rebates, and energy efficiency upgrades. To connect with a benefits counselor near you, contact the Information & Caregiver Resource Center at LifePath: 413-773-5555, 978-544-2259 or [info@LifePathMA.org](mailto:info@LifePathMA.org) to start the referral process.

Learn more online at [LifePathMA.org](http://LifePathMA.org).

## THERE'S NO CARE LIKE HOME CARE

### MEET MELANIE, CHHA, SERVING ELDERLY AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FOR NEARLY 40 YEARS



Melanie has been a certified home health aide (CHHA) for nearly four decades.

“I have been in the home care field for 37 years,” she says. “I was trained in high school as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) and home health aide (HHA).”

For the past 19 years, Melanie has worked for Collective Home Care, which is based out of Hatfield, Mass., and has been in operation since November 1, 1999. “I have been with this agency since it opened,” says Melanie.

In addition to working with elders and people with disabilities in their homes, Melanie has been doing the scheduling for Collective Home Care’s aides and clients for the past one and a half years. “I love working with the elderly,” says Melanie. “They have so much knowledge on so many things.”

After all these years, Melanie has worked with many different clients. “I have met some wonderful people over the years. I was with one client for 12 years and I still miss him.”

She is most proud of “helping to keep people in their homes for as long as possible.”

If you’re thinking about joining the growing home care field, there are many openings across our region. “If you are a people person, this is a great job,” says Melanie. “You get to hear lots of interesting things.”

Although LifePath does not employ home healthcare workers, the home care agencies with which the nonprofit service agency contracts are frequently looking to add to their team of professionals. You can find links to these agencies at [lifepathma.org/about/career-opportunities/direct-care-worker-opportunities-outside-of-lifepath](http://lifepathma.org/about/career-opportunities/direct-care-worker-opportunities-outside-of-lifepath).

### IN GOOD COMPANY

#### A SKILLED ELDER COMPANION SERVICE

Offering focused attention, engaging activities, outings, and respite for caregivers.



**Sita Lang**  
 Hospice trained/  
 CPR certified

[sitalang@ingoodcompany.com](mailto:sitalang@ingoodcompany.com)  
[www.ingoodcompany.com](http://www.ingoodcompany.com)  
 413-834-7569

Do you love the  
**Great Music Memories**  
 of the **30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, & 70s?**

Support local station  
**WIZZ Radio AM 1520**  
 And help keep your favorite  
 tunes on the air

Contribute via PayPal at

**Wizzradio.com**

or by mail:

P.O. Box 983

Greenfield, MA 01302



*“I wanted to do something worthwhile to help people. I'm happy they can count on me, that they feel they can trust me.”*

—Annmarie Newton,  
 Volunteer Ombudsman

Find your purpose.  
 Volunteer with LifePath.

Volunteer Ombudsmen are needed in Franklin County & the North Quabbin!

**Next FREE training: October 3-5**

Request info and application: Trevor Boeding, Program Director  
 (413) 773-5555 x2241 | [TBoeding@LifePathMA.org](mailto:TBoeding@LifePathMA.org)



### Collective Home Care Inc.

Providing Compassionate and Professional Home Health Care Services in Franklin and Hampshire Counties.

**413-397-9933**

Locally Owned and Operated since 1999

## Complete Bathroom Remodeling



Visit our showroom at  
 6 French King Highway, Greenfield

1-413-273-8243

| [REBATH.COM](http://REBATH.COM)

