Are you afraid of falling? Have you fallen in the past and find yourself not willing to participate in activities you enjoy? If so, you are not alone. One in three people age 65 or older fall each year, making falls the leading cause of non-fatal injuries and injury-related death (www.cdc.gov/mmwr).

While falling is associated with aging, falls are NOT a natural part of the aging process. Risk factors associated with falling include physical inactivity and lifestyle, hazards in the home, poor posture, health problems, medications, and changes in vision. The more risk factors, the greater the potential of falling.

The good news is that falls can be prevented! Research shows clearly that participating in physical activity is, in fact, the easiest and simplest way to help prevent falls and help improve quality of life for older persons. Further, participating in physical activity can reduce disability, extend years of active independent living, and may also help in the management of chronic diseases.

Before making any changes, or starting an exercise program, it is a good idea to consult your physician about your falling concerns, especially if you have previously fallen. Your physician may have specific program recommendations for you to follow, or may want to refer you to a physical therapist. Your physician will also want to rule out any underlying causes for a fall such as an undiagnosed condition, or changes in an existing condition.

Any kind of physical activity incorporated into daily living is beneficial, but the kinds of activities most often recommended to prevent falling include mobility, strength, balance, and flexibility.

Fit & Fall Proof™ is an exercise program which focuses on preventing falls and emphasizes balance, strength, flexibility, and mobility. The Fit & Fall Proof™ program is offered statewide and is available in many communities in Southeastern Idaho including Pocatello, Marsh Valley, Blackfoot, Fort Hall, Aberdeen, Preston, Soda Springs, and Stone. The program is also available in Pocatello on Community Access TV Monday through Friday at 10:00. Fit & Fall Proof™ classes are taught by trained, peer volunteers, and anyone who is interested, can take the class leader training and start a class. For more information about Fit & Fall Proof, and learn how to start a Fit & Fall Proof™ class, contact Cherie Nelson at the Southeastern District Health Department at 478-6315. You can also view a Fit and Fall Proof™ video at our web site at http://sdhidaho.org/hpro/injury_prev.php.