Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Gives Key Ways to Prevent Falls in Your Daily Life

BOSTON — November 30, 2012 — Each year, 1 in 3 Americans age 65 or older fall down, and the risk of falling increases with age. A fall can easily occur by tripping over a throw rug, stumbling when going up and down a flight of stairs, wearing ill-fitted shoes, or moving around in dark rooms.

According to the Massachusetts Health and Human Services department, falls are the 3rd leading cause of death in the state and the leading cause of injury-related hospital stays and emergency department visits. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) offers tips to reduce the number of accidents seniors have due to falls.

There are several ways to prevent falls around your home, while you're active, or when you're out in public:

Talk to Your Doctor About Medications

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to review your current list of prescriptions and over-the-counter medicines to find out if any increase your risk for falls.
- Be aware that alcohol interacts with many medications, potentially increasing the negative side effects.

Make Your Home Safe

- Remove throw rugs and secure rugs to the floor with double-sided tape and put non-slip mats in the tub and shower.
- Install handrails on both sides of the stairway, and grab bars in the toilet and shower areas.
- Use extra lighting in dark areas; put nightlights in hallways, stairways, bedrooms, and bathrooms.
- Wear proper-fitting shoes with firm, non-skid soles; avoid loose-fitting slippers and sandals.

Get Regular Vision Exams

- Have your eyes examined annually; poor vision can raise your risk for falls.
- Be sure your eyeglasses are clean, in good repair, and the correct prescription strength.
- Wear sunglasses to cut down on glare.

Stay Active

- Exercise to improve your strength, balance, and overall health. Discover many fun ways to get active—and stay active—at www.bluecrossma.com/getactive.
- Drink water regularly, so you don't get dehydrated, which could lead to falling.
- Call Keep Moving, to learn how you can join an organized walking program for people over age 50. Visit www.mass.gov/dph/keepmoving or call **1-617-624-5972**.

Remember, if you've fallen in the past, you're at a higher risk for falling again. For your own health and safety, if you do fall, it's important to inform your doctor right away. For more information, please call the Massachusetts Department of Public Health at **1-800-227-SAFE** (**7233**) or visit their website to learn about more safety information.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (www.bluecrossma.com) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. Celebrating our 75th anniversary in 2012, we are committed to working with others in a spirit of shared responsibility to make quality health care affordable. Consistent with our corporate promise to always put our 2.8 million members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality.

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