

## **Q&A Summary**

### **Preventing Falls in Older Adults**

*Responses completed by: Barney Spivack, MD, FACP, CMD, National Medical Director, Medicare Case & Condition Management, Team Lead, Medicare, Optum, Population Health Solutions and Prevention*

#### **What programs or assistance can we give to our members who need grab bars placed in the home?**

Social work (SW) referral would be recommended to attempt to identify appropriate and available community resources. Some communities have handyman-type volunteer service organizations and other volunteer groups potentially available to assist; privately paid services may be needed. If a physical therapist (PT) recommends environmental adjustments, additional recommendations for service providers for home repair and other recommended adjustments might be available from PT.

#### **Are these new Osteo Strong programs something good to recommend?**

We cannot recommend private profit-based programs; Osteo Strong is a franchised private program said to increase bone strength. I am unfamiliar with any good quality evidence of its role in relation to decreasing fall risk or in fall prevention. Community-based exercise programs with proven efficacy as indicated within Slide 16 (based on Centers for Disease Control [CDC] data) can be recommended.

#### **Is Tai Chi typically covered by insurance like Silver Sneakers?**

Benefit issues will need to be addressed by designated individuals. Tai Chi training is not a Medicare-covered benefit.

#### **Is Silver Sneakers covered by health plans/Medicare/Medicaid?**

I believe this issue has been addressed — Silver Sneakers is a program that may be available to those in certain plans. This question would need to be addressed by a designated individual knowledgeable regarding plan benefits. SEE below from Medicare:

<https://www.medicare.gov/coverage/fitness-programs.html>

#### **Gym memberships and fitness programs: How often is it covered?**

Original Medicare doesn't cover gym memberships or fitness programs. Gym memberships or fitness programs may be part of the extra coverage offered by these:

- Medicare Advantage plans or other Medicare health plans
- Medicare Supplement Insurance (Medigap) plans

If you have one of these, call your plan to see if it covers gym memberships or fitness programs.