

ANYONE CAN FALL

Prevent it from happening to you

Safe Winter Walking

Every year, older adults across Canada participate in a variety of outdoor activities during the winter months. However, winter presents a changing landscape that can lead to tripping hazards not present in other seasons. The presence of environmental hazards, such as freezing rain, ice buildup and hard packed snow, increase the risk of falling due to the slippery surface they create.

While it can be easy to recognize most winter hazards, others such as the presence of “black ice” or an icy patch covered by snow, may be more difficult to identify. That is why it is important to be aware of the steps you can take to help prevent slips, trips and falls this winter. This includes following the lead of penguins, the only creatures that have mastered the winter walk, when stepping onto a slippery surface.

The good news is that family, friends and municipalities can all play a role to help you stay safe when walking outdoors this winter. Keep in mind that by reaching out to others for support, you can better reduce your risk of falling, prevent serious injuries and maintain your independence.

NOVA SCOTIA

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Finding Balance

To learn more about preventing falls, visit *www.FindingBalanceNS.ca*

Common Winter Hazards

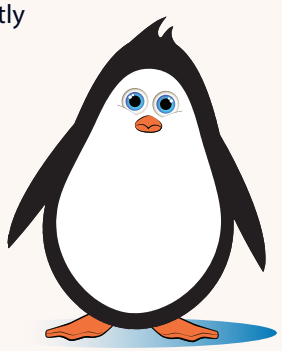
- A common winter hazard when outdoors are slippery surfaces. This can be the result of ice, freezing-rain or hard packed snow.
- Snow and ice combined with darker days make walkways and parking lots treacherous in the winter. Clear snow from steps, walkways, and driveways and be sure that they are free of any tripping hazards.
- Be careful when there is freezing water on pavement, roads or sidewalks. Although the surface may not seem slippery, there is a chance a thin sheet of transparent ice or "Black Ice" is covering the ground.
- Oftentimes, hazards such as uneven sidewalks and icy patches can be hidden under the snow. This makes them especially difficult to identify. If you encounter such outdoor hazards in your community, take note of them so that you can address your concerns with the help of the appropriate municipal administrators.

Before Stepping Outdoors

- Everyone should dress warmly during the winter months, but you should also choose clothing that is visible to drivers and allows you to move freely and comfortably.
- Be sure to wear your glasses and/or hearing aids if you need them. While seeing the environment is important, you also want to be sure you can hear approaching traffic and different warning signals.
- It is recommended that you place a chair at your home's entryways, so you can sit while putting on or removing your boots.
- To improve your footing and increase traction on slippery surfaces, consider the following:
  - Select footwear that is lightweight, waterproof, well-insulated and has a thick, non-slip tread sole
  - Add ice-grippers onto the sole of your boots. However, do not forget to remove them when coming indoors.
  - Place a rubber tip or a retractable ice pick attachment on the end of a cane to further help ensure safe, secure footing on snow or ice.
  - Bring a small bag of grit, sand or non-clumping cat litter with you to sprinkle on the ground when you are confronted with icy sidewalks, parking lots, stairs or other slippery areas.

Walking Like a Penguin

The penguin is the only animal that has mastered the winter walk. To avoid a fall and possible injuries when walking on icy surfaces, think about following their lead by:



- Pointing your feet out slightly
- Keeping your knees relaxed and walking flat-footed
- Taking shorter, shuffle-like steps
- Keeping your arms out and your hands free
- Concentrating on keeping your balance and moving SLOWLY
- Avoid distracted walking. This can be done by staying off your phone and avoiding looking at something other than the direction you're traveling in.
- Be especially careful if you must carry heavy loads since it may impair your ability to maintain your balance when walking.

Getting Support

- Consult a healthcare professional at least once a year to assess your fall risk or at anytime if you are concerned about your risk of falling.
- Ask someone to accompany you. Should a fall occur, having another person around can help ensure you stay safe and receive the appropriate help in a timely manner.
- Consider asking someone else such as a family member or a friend for help to remove the snow and ice from your driveway, walkways and steps.
- If you identified a hazard in your community, consider bringing your concern to the attention of the appropriate municipal administrators.

FALLS ARE NOT A NORMAL PART OF AGING.
Talk to your health care provider if you have had a fall.

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