

Farewell to Falls



In Farewell to Falls, CARP explores the unknown consequences of falls, hidden falls hazards and strategies you can take to make sure you don't slip.

Here's what you need to know.

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The Numbers

Your risk of falling increases with age. One third of Canadians over the age of 65 will fall every year and if you are over 85, you are more likely to be hospitalized from a fall. Falls are the cause of a shocking 25% of visits to emergency wards in Canada.

The Impact

Falls are serious. They can lead to hip fractures, head injuries and even death. Falls mean reduced mobility, increased dependence and sometimes a move to long-term care. One fifth of the Canadians hospitalized for a fall have to be admitted to long-term care. Falls are costly. Every year, falls cost our healthcare system approximately \$2 billion.

Keep Moving

Lack of physical activity can lead to weak muscles and poor balance making you more likely to fall. Regular exercise is an important part of decreasing your falls risk.

Protect Yourself

Your exercise routine should include a combination of exercise forms like strength training (e.g. weights), balance exercises (e.g. yoga) and cardio (e.g. biking)



- ☒ Tai Chi is a great exercise form for improving your balance
- ☒ Daily activities like gardening and household cleaning really help you incorporate exercise into your daily routine
- ☒ Exercise for a minimum of 3 hours or more per week

Proper Footwear

Wearing proper footwear plays a huge role in preventing tripping and subsequent falls.



Always wear shoes with laces, backs and good ankle support so your foot is secure while you move around. Running and walking shoes are great options.



Avoid wearing shoes with a soft sole thicker than 2.5cm since they can make it harder for you to tell how your ankle is positioned and impact your balance.

Did you know that older adults who fall are most likely to be wearing slippers? Don't walk around the house in slippers, especially ones that don't have backs or good support.



Safe shoes can still be stylish! Look for options that offer secure styles with good support.



What's the Deal with Heels?

Wearing high heels can make you more likely to fall (and more likely to fracture a bone if you do fall) compared to shoes with a flat or a very low heel. If you need to wear heels, consider a low wedge heel where the entire sole forms the heel of the shoe. This style increases the surface area contact you have with the ground and improves your overall stability.

Medical Review

Medications and certain medical conditions can make you more at risk of falls. Sleeping and psychiatric medications, as well as painkillers, can affect your balance. Conditions like diabetes, dementia and acute infections like a urinary tract infection can increase your falls risk. Having osteoporosis means you're more likely to break a bone if you do fall.



Protect Yourself

- ☒ Talk to your doctor about how any of your medications or health conditions could increase your falls risk.
- ☒ If you develop new conditions or have medication changes, be sure to ask whether they could affect your balance or mobility and any precautions you should take.
- ☒ If you have diabetes, make sure to discuss the necessary specialty footwear and footcare with a certified foot care specialist like a chiropodist or podiatrist.
- ☒ Go for a vision check-up once a year or sooner if you are experiencing changes in your eyesight.

Mindful Mobility

Falls are more likely to happen when you are shifting from one position to another.

Protect Yourself

- ☒ If you use a walker or cane, make sure you use it consistently around the home, especially going to bathroom in the middle of the night.
- ☒ Carrying objects more than 5lbs can make you off-balance and more likely to fall. Consider using a wagon or trolley and don't carry more than you can manage.
- ☒ Avoid wearing clothing that drags on the ground and could be a tripping hazard when you walk.
- ☒ Know your body's limits. If a task feels too difficult, stop what you are doing and ask for help from a friend.



Time for a mobility aid?

Do you find yourself holding on to the grocery cart or furniture surfing for extra balance?

If you do, it may be time to consider a mobility aid. Admitting you need a cane or walker can be difficult but the right mobility aids can play a huge role in preventing falls and protecting your independence!

Home Hazards



The home is a hotspot for falls. Falls resulting in emergency ward visits are more likely to happen at home than anywhere else. The stairs and bathroom are particularly dangerous.

Protect Yourself

- ☒ Watch out for water. Use a non-slip rubber mat in the bathtub and in front of the sink. Always wipe away water that has splashed on the ground, especially directly outside the bathtub.
- ☒ Having something stable to grab can mean the difference between a slip and a broken hip. Handrails on both sides of the stairs and grab bars (by the toilet and shower) are a must.
- ☒ Make sure you have proper lighting in all areas of the home, especially the stairs so that steps are visible. Lights should be 75 watts or brighter but avoid glare. Have switches at the top and bottom of the stairs, a light within reach of your bed and nightlights along the path from the bedroom to bathroom.
- ☒ Eliminate clutter to make sure you have a clear walking path through your house.
- ☒ Secure trailing wires and remove rugs or fix them to the floor.
- ☒ Beware of dangerous doorway thresholds and consider installing a threshold ramp.

Winter Weather

It's true that winter weather creates slippery conditions which make falls more likely to happen. However, don't let your fear of falling get in the way of winter outdoor activities. Staying indoors can actually cause deconditioning that will increase your fall risk. When going out in the ice and snow, take some of these important precautions.



Protect Yourself

Wear boots with a non-slip grip.

Install a 5-prong ice pick on your cane or walker.

Consider using an anti-slip shoe traction device on your shoes.

Walk like a penguin to prevent falls on snow and ice.

How Does a Penguin Walk?

Walking like a penguin means moving slowly and taking very small steps. This way you minimize the time you have to balance on one foot. You should also keep your feet pointed outward to allow for wider base of support and your knees slightly bent to lower your center of gravity. Your hands should be kept out to your side for balance like a penguin's wings.

Interested in learning more about the dangers of falls and falls prevention?

[Click here](#) to have a look at CARP's backgrounder about falls prevention.

About CARP

We work to uphold the rights and improve the lives of Canadians as we age.



CARP's more than **300,000 members** play an active role in developing our advocacy agenda.

Our members are committed to **real change** for older Canadians and are making their voices heard.



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