

Physical activity throughout the year is a part of healthy aging and can help prevent falls and fractures. Walking is a great way to stay active.

## Benefits of walking:

- Improves mental, social, and physical health; balance, posture, muscle strength.
- Reduces the risk of heart disease, developing high blood pressure, diabetes, and improves bone health to reduce the risk of fractures from falls.
- A good way to spend time with others.



During the winter months, many factors can cause a slip, fall, or injury such as fracture.

Many things can impact your safety while you walk including footwear, balance, distractions, and environmental factors such as temperature and snowfall.

Keep your doctor informed of your physical activity level. Medication could increase your risk of falling.



Developed by the Southwest Ontario Regional Fall Prevention Network and may be reproduced for other winter walking fall prevention resources.



# Winter Walking

Enjoy and be safe.



## Before walking:

- Monitor the forecast and plan ahead.
- Dress in layers so you are prepared for changing winter weather. Stay warm by wearing a hat, scarf, and gloves.
- Wear bright colours so you can be seen.
- Wear something reflective at night.
- Choose warm, stable footwear – look for well-insulated and lightweight footwear with a non-slip tread sole.
- Consider a cane or walking poles, use ice grippers on footwear and assistive devices when outside.
- Also consider carrying a baggie of sand or clean kitty litter in your pocket. If you see ice, throw some sand or kitty litter down for better grip.



## During your walk:

- Give time to let your eyes adjust when going from outdoors to indoors or vice versa.
- Be aware of your surroundings and scan for hazards. Black ice is often not visible to the eye.
- Watch for ice, cracks, and uneven or changing surfaces.
- If you find yourself walking on ice, move slowly. Keep knees loose, shorten your strides, and shuffle your feet. Wet leaves, rain, and snow drifts can be as risky as ice.
- Keep your hands out of your pockets to help stay balanced.
- Take extra care when stepping off the last step of stairs. Use the hand rail when available for extra support.



## After you walk:

- Assess how you feel. If you are sore, switch to shorter walks and gradually increase your walking time.
- Drink water often. Dehydration can increase your risk of falling. It's important to stay hydrated, especially when you've done physical activity.

## Top Tips for Winter Walking:

- Wear reflective clothing, warm clothing, and non-slip footwear.
- Tell someone before you leave.
- Walk on clear paths.
- Watch for hazards.

**Enjoy winter walking and be safe!**

For more information on safe winter walking, and to learn more about how you can stay safe and prevent a fall, contact the Grey Bruce Health Unit at 1-800-263-3456



**Grey Bruce**

**Fall Prevention and Intervention Program**

[www.findingbalanceontario.ca](http://www.findingbalanceontario.ca)