

Problems with balance?

We can help!

**PHYSIOTHERAPY
MASSAGE
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Are You Ready for the Icy Weather?

With the colder weather we will inevitably soon be dealing with snow and its nasty side-kick ice. For many seniors it is the cause of isolation in their homes. Those who suffer a fracture from falling on ice lose time from work and other activities and may need assistance at home. Although one really is at the mercy of the weather conditions, there are a few things that you can do to lessen the risk of a slip and fall on the ice or the resulting potential for a fracture.

Wear ice grippers. Although not stylish and a nuisance to



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put on and take off, ice grippers placed over your boots are helpful and are less of a nuisance than a fracture or concussion. If you use a cane, get an ice tip from your local pharmacy.

Keep a SMALL bag of salt or cat litter on the floor of the passenger side in your car, along with a small scoop. When you arrive at your destination and it is icy, the salt/grit can be spread by your car door and may help you get out of your car more safely than without it. From there you can spread more salt/grit along your path. Leave exterior lights on if you know that you will be coming home in the dark.

Bones have a better chance of withstanding a fall if they are strong. Vitamin D is required to build strong bones by helping the body absorb calcium. Canadians do not get enough

daily vitamin D as a natural source is sunlight and adults are unable to get enough vitamin D through a nutritious diet. As we age, the ability to make vitamin D decreases. Thus, a vitamin D supplement is recommended for adults. Speak with your pharmacist about what amount is best for you.

Vitamin D also improves muscle function. Along with strong bones, one needs strong muscles to help maintain good balance. A risk on its own, poor balance can lead to falling in good weather conditions. Balance can be a challenge for those with certain medical conditions or simply if you are dehydrated or have not been regularly exercising your body's balance systems.

Adding an icy surface to the scene increases the risk of falling for those with and without balance problems.

Balance improves quickly with exercise. Once the weather conditions are less conducive to outdoor walking, it will be time to investigate other modes of exercise. Yoga, supervised exercise classes or following a program developed by a personal fitness or physiotherapist will help to develop your strength and improve your balance. Exercise needs to be done regularly to gain from its benefits. As the saying goes, 'You Lose it if You Don't Use It'. Don't find out the hard way that you weren't prepared for Old Man Winter this year.



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