



Winter Active and Winter Safe

Winter poses many challenges and the dilemma is how to continue to be physically active and keep yourself safe at the same time. Many people prefer to be active outdoors however limit their activity in the winter due to legitimate concerns about tripping, slipping or falling on the ice or snow. The personal cost to older adults who experience a fall can have long term consequences including chronic pain, loss of independence, and fear of future falls that can limit a healthy active lifestyle.

How can you make sure that you keep yourself safe?

- Choose a good pair of light weight winter boots that are warm and provide good support. Look for boots that fit you well, are well insulated and waterproof, have a non-slip tread sole with wide, low heels.
- Ice grippers on footwear can help you walk on hard packed snow and ice but can become dangerously slippery and must be removed before walking indoors and on smooth surfaces such as stone, tile or ceramic. Curling grippers or toe rubbers that slip onto shoes are a good substitute and do not need to be removed when indoors.
- Using a cane can help with balance but it must be the right height for you. A good rule of thumb is that when you put your arms by your side, the top of the cane should be at wrist level. Attach an ice pick to the end of your cane when outside remembering to flip it back up when you get indoors.
- Trekking poles with ice picks can also help stabilize you while walking.
- Wear bright clothing or add reflective tape so that you can be visible to drivers.
- Dress in layers to keep warm.
- Give yourself plenty of time and watch out for hazards.
- If it's a sunny day remember to wear your sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection.

Once the snow and ice have arrived, how do you make sure the walking surface is safe?

- Keep entrances and sidewalks clear of snow and ice

- Report hazards on sidewalks to your landlord, store owner, or City of Saskatoon
- Contact your local home support agency or other community services for help with snow removal, transportation and grocery delivery
- Carry a small bag of grit (mixture of ½ sand and ½ salt) or non-clumping kitty litter in your jacket pocket to sprinkle on an icy spot on the sidewalk, steps or bus stops.
- Ask someone to help you cross the icy surface.

What should you do if it is impossible to avoid an icy patch?

- Slow down and think about your next move
- Keep your body as loose as possible
- Spread your feet wide apart to provide a base of support to stabilize you
- Bend your knees slightly and take a small step putting your whole foot down at once
- Shift your weight very slowly to this foot and bring your other foot to meet it the same way - some people prefer to drag their feet or shuffle them keeping your base of support at least one foot wide.

For more information on how to stay safe, contact Janet Barnes, Senior Recreation Therapist, Community Older Adult, Saskatoon Health Region @655-7874.