



## **Stay On Your Feet...**

### **STEP 1 Be Active**

The best way to reduce your risk of falling is to be physically active. Choose an activity you enjoy so you'll stick to it and do it regularly.

#### **How much?**

Aim for at least 30 minutes of activity per day. You can do your activity in 10 or 15 minute segments. Start slowly and build up to the target.

#### **Ways to be active**

Walking is an easy and enjoyable exercise for most people. It strengthens your leg muscles, improves your balance and needs no equipment except a good pair of shoes.

Choose activities that increase muscle strength in your legs and upper body, and that improve your balance, posture and stamina. Here are some examples of activities that can help:

- Active gardening and housework, washing the car or walking the dog
- Balance-oriented classes such as tai chi, yoga or pilates
- Swimming, cycling, dancing, golfing, tennis or lawn bowling
- Strength training and fitness classes such as aerobics or aqua-aerobics

#### **Talk to your doctor**

Even if you have health conditions, you can still do some physical activity. Talk to your doctor first. You may be afraid of falling, but not doing any activity can reduce your quality of life, your ability to move around and your independence. Talk to your doctor if you feel you are limiting your physical activity or are becoming isolated.

### **Stay Active, Stay Independent and Stay On Your Feet!**



For more information on the 9 steps, call:

**Stay On Your Feet Sudbury Manitoulin** 705.674.4330

**Stay On Your Feet North Bay** 705.474.1400

**Stay On Your Feet Parry Sound** 705.746.5801 or  
1.800.563.2808

# What am I doing to be physically active?

Review your current physical activity and complete the table below.  
*An example is given to help.*

**What positive steps am I already taking?**

*Weeding the rose beds weekly*

**What changes might help me stay on my feet?**

*Find a walking partner for early morning walks*

**How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?**

*Check with Mary next door to see if she is interested in walking early in the morning*

**Do you know anyone else who would benefit from this information?**



## **Stay On Your Feet...**

### **STEP 2 Manage Your Medicines**

All medicines have side effects. Some may increase your risk of falling. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you become drowsy, dizzy, light headed, unsteady, have blurred or double vision or have difficulty thinking clearly. Side effects vary from person to person and can change when different medicines are combined.

#### **Ways to manage your medicines**

- Take an active role in your own health.
- Ask questions about your medicines. Find out about possible side effects and plan ahead. Make sure you know when to take them and what they are for.
- Consider using a dosette box or a blister pack to separate your medicines into the times and days you need to use them. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about one.
- Check before mixing prescription medicines (from your doctor), over-the-counter medicines (such as vitamins, herbal remedies and painkillers) or alternative medicines (from practitioners such as naturopaths).

#### **Get your medicines reviewed regularly**

Review your medicines regularly (every six to 12 months) with your doctor or pharmacist. Then you will know you are taking the right medicines, at the right dose, at the right time.

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# My review of my medicines

Review how you are managing your medicines and complete the table below. *An example is given to help.*

<b>What positive steps am I already taking?</b>	<b>What changes might help me stay on my feet?</b>	<b>How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?</b>
<p><i>All my medicines are in the same cupboard</i></p> <p><i>I throw out all medicines once they reach their expiry date</i></p>	<p><i>Talk with my doctor to review my medicines</i></p>	<p><i>Make an appointment with my doctor</i></p>

**Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?**



## **Stay On Your Feet...**

### **STEP 3 - Manage Your Health**

Some long-term health conditions can increase your risk of falling. These include:

- Heart conditions
- Diabetes
- Parkinson's disease
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- High or low blood pressure
- Depression
- Dementia

They may cause dizziness, confusion, lightheadedness, slowed reactions, reduced awareness or blurred vision. Other risk factors include stiff muscles or joints, poor vision, reduced concentration, pain and lack of energy. Poor posture can also make you unsteady.

#### **Ways to manage your health**

- Take notice when you don't feel right and try to find a solution.
- Learn about your condition – ask your doctor, get fact sheets or join a support group.
- Have regular checkups to discuss your concerns, prevent complications and get early treatment.
- Make sure you understand and manage your medicines.

#### **Balance your life**

- Do pain management activities such as tai chi, massage or hydrotherapy.
- Manage your stress. Do meditation or talk to someone.
- Enjoy your social and recreational activities.
- Eat well, drink alcohol in moderation and quit smoking.

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# How can I better manage my health?

Review what you do now to manage your health and complete the table below. An example is given to help.

<b>What positive steps am I already taking?</b>	<b>What changes might help me stay on my feet?</b>	<b>How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?</b>
<p><i>I have 3 alcohol-free days per week</i></p> <p><i>I do meditation to help with my stress levels</i></p>	<p><i>Check out hydrotherapy for my arthritis</i></p>	<p><i>Get some more information about my arthritis from the Arthritis Society</i></p>

Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?



## *Stay On Your Feet...*

### **STEP 4 Improve Your Balance**

Balance sensors are found in your inner ear, eyes, joints and muscles. Any disruption to these organs and pathways can upset your balance, increasing your risk of falling.

#### **Factors that can affect your balance are:**

- Loss of muscle strength
- Reduced joint movement and stability
- The side effects of some medicines
- Ear problems, including wax build up
- Sudden movements, especially rising quickly from a sitting or kneeling position
- The short-term effects of a hip or knee replacement

#### **Ways to improve your balance**

- Think about using a walking aid. Talk with your doctor, physiotherapist or occupational therapist about what option would be best for you.
- Be active. Take part in a physical activity that improves your strength, balance and flexibility.
- Manage your medicines.

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# What can I do to improve my balance?

Review what you are doing to improve your balance and complete the table below. An example is given to help.

**What positive steps am I already taking?**

*I participate in a tai chi class once a week*

**What changes might help me stay on my feet?**

*Talk with my doctor about whether I need a walking aid*

*Check out whether I should do some weight training at the gym*

**How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?**

*Call the local gym to see if they have special weight training classes*

**Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?**





## **Stay On Your Feet...**

### **STEP 5 Walk Tall**

Always walk with your body upright and straight. Over time, changes may take place in the way you walk. It may be due to hip degeneration or lack of physical activity.

#### **Changes to your walk can be caused by many things:**

- A loss of leg strength leads to shuffling and putting your feet closer together (women) or further apart (men).
- Poor hip flexibility and reduced shoulder mobility causes you to take shorter steps.
- Loss of strength in the upper body and back makes you lean forward in order to balance.

#### **How to walk tall**

- Becoming more active can help you return to being straight and upright.
- Perhaps a walking aid can help. Talk to your doctor, physiotherapist or occupational therapist about what would work for you.

#### **If you use a walking aid**

- Make sure it was designed and fitted just for you. If it is the wrong length you are likely to lean to one side and walk crooked.
- Keep it clean and in good working order, especially if it has rubber tips or wheels.
- Organize your home so you can get around with your walking aid. You may need to rearrange some furniture.

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# What can I do to walk tall?

Review what you do to walk tall and complete the table below.

An example is given to help.

**What positive steps am I already taking?**

*I walk quite a bit, but not as regularly as before*

**What changes might help me stay on my feet?**

*I'll try to walk 3 times a week*

*Maybe I can try pilates*

**How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?**

*Dave next door does early morning walks, I can call him to see if I can join him*

*Check out the local gym for pilates classes*

**Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?**



## Stay On Your Feet...

### STEP 6 Foot Care and Safe Footwear

Managing your shoes and feet is an important part of preventing falls. Poor footwear or common foot problems such as corns, calluses or ingrown nails can upset your balance and even change your walk.

#### Ways to look after your feet

- See a podiatrist to have your feet checked out, nails cut and corns dealt with. You don't need a referral.
- Do foot exercises to maintain good circulation in your feet, ankles and legs. Ask a physiotherapist for advice.
- Consult your doctor if you have any foot pain.
- Try a foot massage. A friend or relative may be able to help.
- Pamper yourself! Give your feet a soak and a rub with moisturizer.

#### Choose suitable footwear

Proper shoes don't have to be ugly or expensive. You will find many brands and styles that are safe, comfortable and designed to fit an orthotic, if you need one.

#### Check your current shoes for these features:

- **A good fit** gives you a safe walking pattern and proper balance.
- **Laces or Velcro** fasteners are the best choice. If you have trouble tying laces, look for special gadgets found at pharmacies.
- **Lots of contact with the ground** gives your feet stability. Wear flat shoes with low, broad heels.
- **A sole with a good grip.** A good grip depends on the material used, the pattern in the sole, or both. A shoe repairer may be able to add grips to your current footwear.
- **A rounded or beveled edge at the heel.** This increases the contact area and grip at the heel, making it safer.

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- **A thin, firm mid sole.** These are more stable than soft soles. Unless, your doctor or podiatrist have advised you otherwise.
  - **A high heel collar** may help. However, it cannot be too restrictive since you need a certain amount of foot flexibility.

**Generally, unsafe footwear includes:**

- High or narrow heels
- Slippery or worn heels
- Soft or stretched uppers
- Slip-on shoes or slippers
- Worn, loose or ill-fitting shoes
- Heavy shoes



# What am I doing to care for my feet? Is my footwear safe?

Review your current foot care routine and your footwear.  
Complete the table below. An example is given to help.

<b>What positive steps am I already taking?</b>	<b>What changes might help me stay on my feet?</b>	<b>How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?</b>
<i>I see a podiatrist once a year</i>	<i>I'm going to use the footwear features listed in this step to see if my shoes are safe</i>	<i>I'll see what I might need to do about my shoes  I'll talk to my friend about this. He wears very old sneakers which he doesn't tie up and he nearly fell over the other day</i>

Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?



## **Stay On Your Feet...**

# **STEP 7 Regularly Check Your Eyesight and Hearing**

## **Eyesight**

Visit an eye care professional (optometrist or ophthalmologist) every two years to detect and manage any changes to your eyesight. Most changes are gradual so you may not notice them immediately, but if left untreated, poor eyesight will increase your risk of falling.

### **Do simple eye checks yourself**

Look at different targets and cover one eye and then the other to see if your vision is changing.

- Does it take longer to read street signs when driving?
- Do you see fewer fine details when looking at nearby objects?
- Is it difficult to see furniture in a room with poor light?

### **Look after your eyesight**

- Have your vision tested regularly, at least every two years and more often if you notice that your sight is changing, blurred or cloudy.
- Have your eyewear checked annually by your optometrist.
- Make sure you wear your prescribed eyewear as recommended.
- Allow up to two weeks to get used to new eyewear, particularly bifocals or multifocals. If you still have problems after two weeks, return to your optometrist.
- If you wear bifocal or multifocal glasses, be careful walking up and down stairs and when stepping off curbs.
- Eat a balanced diet with yellow and green vegetables. They are high in vitamins A and E, which are important for maintaining good eyesight.
- Take breaks often when you are doing close work, like reading or sewing.
- Give your eyes time to adjust when you move into a darker or brighter area.

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## Watch for changes to your eyesight

Some people think if they can still read the newspaper or watch television their eyesight is fine. This is not necessarily true. Some eye disorders may be temporary, like those from changes in your blood pressure or increased pressure in your eyeball. These conditions may reduce your vision for 5 to 10 minutes. If you have any of the following changes, talk to your doctor as soon as possible:

- Blurred or less detailed vision
- Watering of the eyes
- Eyes taking longer to adjust to light changes, especially in the dark
- Greater sensitivity to glare
- Less accuracy when judging distances and depth
- Loss of ability to see well in low contrast light
- Eye disorders such as cataracts, glaucoma or macular degeneration

## Hearing

### What causes hearing difficulties?

- Wax build up in the ear
- Hearing aids that are dirty, have old batteries or are no longer appropriate for your hearing loss
- Certain medications
- Inner ear problems
- Conditions such as Tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ears) or Ménière's disease

### What you can do

- If you think you have wax build up in your ear, talk to your doctor
- Talk to your doctor if you have trouble hearing
- Learn to care for your hearing aid
- Clean your hearing aids often and check batteries regularly
- When in a public place, try to sit in a corner to reduce noise



# How am I protecting my eyesight and hearing?

Review what you are doing to protect your eyesight and hearing and complete the table below. An example is given to help.

**What positive steps am I already taking?**

*I have my eyes tested each year*

**What changes might help me stay on my feet?**

*I need to mark the edge of the steps at the back door with bright paint*

*When I come inside from doing the gardening, I will sit down for a few minutes to help my eyes adjust to the light inside the house*

**How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?**

*I'll make an appointment with my optometrist to get my glasses checked*

**Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?**





## **Stay On Your Feet...**

### **STEP 8 Eat Well for Life**

What you eat affects your risk of falling. If you skip a meal, don't eat enough, or don't eat nutritious foods, you may become dizzy, weak, light headed or have trouble concentrating. Drinking too much alcohol will also impair your judgment, coordination and concentration.

#### **Keep your bones strong**

Prevent osteoporosis. This condition causes your bones to become smaller, more fragile, and more likely to break. You can prevent osteoporosis by eating foods rich in calcium and vitamin D. Good sources of vitamin D include:

- Egg yolks
- Fatty fish, such as salmon
- Foods fortified with vitamin D (low-fat milk, yogurt and fortified soy beverage)
- A daily 400 IU vitamin D supplement (recommended by Canada's Food Guide)

#### **Building blocks of good health**

- Vegetables and fruit are important for good health. They are packed with vitamins, minerals and fibre. They also protect you against cancer and osteoporosis.
- Canada's Food Guide recommends people over 50 years eat seven servings of vegetables and fruit each day.

#### **Stay hydrated**

- Aim for six to eight cups of fluids each day. Fluids are essential to healthy living.
- Water is a great way to quench your thirst, but there are many other ways to get fluid including vegetable and fruit juices, low-fat milk, fortified soy beverages, soups, coffee, and tea.

#### **Shake your salt habit**

- Eating too much salt can raise blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease.
- Reduce salt by cutting down on processed foods, such as fast foods, processed meats and canned soups.

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# How are my eating habits?

Review how you are eating and complete the table below.  
An example is given to help.

<b>What positive steps am I already taking?</b>	<b>What changes might help me stay on my feet?</b>	<b>How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?</b>
<p><i>I limit the amount of foods I eat that have a lot of salt in them</i></p> <p><i>I have dinner with my grandchildren once a week</i></p>	<p><i>I will eat 3 meals per day with a few healthy snacks; I often skip breakfast</i></p>	<p><i>I'll get a copy of Canada's Food Guide to make sure I'm getting all 4 food groups in my diet</i></p>

**Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?**



## Stay On Your Feet...

# STEP 9 Identify, Remove and Report Hazards

Many people think falls are caused by hazards around the home, but actually most falls are caused by personal situations such as your lifestyle or your physical or mental state.

### Common hazards inside the home:

- Slippery floors
- Clutter or obstacles on the floor, including unsecured electrical cords
- Loose mats or scatter rugs

### Common hazards outside the home:

- Garden paths that are cluttered or in disrepair
- Uneven or pot-holed footpaths and other surfaces
- Slippery floors in shopping centres or other places
- Poorly lit stairs
- Carpeted stairs that lack contrast, making edges hard to see

### Minimize hazards

#### In the home:

- Install good lighting
- Remove items you could trip over
- Keep hallways and passages clear
- Clean up spills right away so you don't slip
- Make steps safer with edging strips and a railing to hold onto

#### Outside the home:

- Maintain all walkways and paths so they are even and not slippery
- Store hoses, tools and other items away after use

#### Away from home:

- If you see a potential hazard, report it to your local Public Works department or the owner or manager of the commercial premises

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# What hazards do I need to consider?

Review your action on hazards and complete the table below.

*An example is given to help.*

**What positive steps am I already taking?**

*I called the Public Works department the other day and told them about the dangerous paving near the tree at the corner*

**What changes might help me stay on my feet?**

*I'll put in a night light that comes on automatically when anyone goes near the back steps*

**How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?**

*Call the electrician*

**Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?**