

How Canadian Seniors Can Stay Safe This Winter



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Why Safety and Why Now?

The arrival of chilly weather and shorter days is a signal that winter is nearly upon us. **Are you ready for freezing rain, icy surfaces and snow?**

While you may have been able to get away with being housebound throughout the summer and fall months, there are holiday gatherings, shopping for gifts and various other errands that will require you to leave home — even on those chilly days where you'd much rather stay indoors.



Let Ideas Compete, [Flickr](#)

Icy sidewalks pose a safety concern in the winter months for seniors. Make sure you take extra precaution while you're out and about to avoid injury.

For Canadian seniors, the cold hard fact is that winter conditions can pose a myriad of safety concerns, both inside and outside of home. From slipping on sidewalks and frostbite to hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning, danger can lurk in many unexpected places — it is vital you take extra precautions to protect yourself this season.

All too often, the elderly population end up in the emergency room this time of year with severe and life-threatening injuries that are a result of winter-related accidents — most of which could have easily been avoided. Don't become another statistic. **This ebook will show you how to have a safe and healthy winter season so you can keep up with the holiday hustle and bustle.**

CHAPTER 01

PREVENT SLIPS AND FALLS

How To Stay Safe While Staying Active

Yes, do go outside and get some exercise and fresh air during the winter months — after all, you don't want to stay cooped up and catch cabin fever or possibly fall into a depression, which can happen for seniors who are housebound and socially isolated. While you are out and about, **it is important that you reduce your risk for falls and fractures.**



Image by [Wikipedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Man running in the cold weather of Chicago.

Did you know that falls are one of the leading causes of injury for seniors?

According to the [B.C. Ministry of Health](#),



1 in 3 British Columbians over the age of **65** will fall at least **once a year.**

Falls are the main reason why older adults lost their independence.

For youth, it's easy to brush off a fall; bumps and scrapes don't tend to do a lot of harm other than leave an eyesore on your skin. As we age, even a little harmless fall can have a devastating effect on our health and lifestyle. Common fall-related injuries for seniors include: hip and wrist fractures, head trauma and major lacerations.

[The Public Health Agency of Canada](#) reports that the likelihood of dying from a fall-related injury increases with age — **among 20% of deaths related to injury can be traced back to a fall.** Fortunately, there are several ways for one to protect themselves from tripping or slipping.

7 Ways You Can Prevent Falls This Winter

#1. Proper Foot Wear

Don't even think about stepping outside this chilly season without **a good pair of high-quality winter boots**. In addition to keeping your feet warm and warding off frost bite, you'll protect yourself from slipping.

[The Canada Safety Council](#) suggests seniors look for the following features in their footwear:

- Well insulated and waterproof
- wide, low heels
- light in weight



A pair of boots with good traction will help safeguard you from the dangers of icy sidewalks and roads.

Get a Grip

Another option to consider is [ice grippers](#) — these handy little devices slip over your existing shoes an easy way to give you some **extra grip in icy conditions**.

Note: While ice grippers are helpful for walking on hard-packed snow and ice, they can become dangerously slippery if used on smooth surfaces like ceramic, stone or tile. **Always remember to remove the grippers before transitioning to a smoother surface to avoid injury.** When you are removing your grippers, make sure you are sitting down to avoid toppling over.



Trekking through a really slippery area? Grippers can help in the worst of conditions.

#2. Salt & Clear All Walkways

This may seem like a no-brainer, however, many forget about salting their walkways and steps until it's too late. For those who don't have salt on hand, **cat litter or sand are just as effective —they're also less evasive on concrete.** If you're physically unable to shovel the snow from your walkway, **consider a snow removal service or ask a friend or family member for a hand.** Chances are, they'll be happy to lend a helping hand. **Don't over-exert yourself and risk injury.**



Image by [Flickr](#)

Note: Keep a small bag of that sand, salt or cat litter in your pocket to sprinkle on icy patches while you are out walking.

#3. Walk With a Friend

There is always safety in numbers — **this is especially true for seniors who want to keep fit during winter.** This way, if you fall and injure yourself, your walking buddy can flag someone down to help bring you to safety.



Image by [Flickr](#)

Don't hesitate to bring a friend on a walk - they'll be there for you if anything happens.

#4. Have Contact Information On Hand

Always have your emergency contact information, list of medications and allergies on hand in case you become disoriented or unconscious and require medical attention. **A medical alert bracelet is a great option that could save your life** by preventing hospital staff from administering a drug that would trigger an allergic reaction.



Medical alert braces like these are great for those who are in distress.

#5. Maintain Good Bone Health

Brittle bones and winter walking conditions can be a bad — even deadly — combination for seniors. That's why **it's vital to ensure a healthy diet rich with calcium**, which can be found in everyday foods like broccoli, cheese, milk, etc. Diet alone usually isn't enough, make sure you are getting your **daily dose of supplements such as calcium and vitamin D** — or whatever your doctor has recommended.



Getting calcium and Vitamin D from supplements like these is an easy way to maintain proper bone health.



Water aerobics are ideal for seniors looking to stay active.

#7. Take Your Time

Nowadays, everyone seems to always be in a hurry to get from 'Point A' to 'Point B' — this is often true of both pedestrians and drivers. Even if it's tempting to keep up with the hustle and bustle, it is important that you **take it slow while you are out walking**. Most stumbles occur from tripping over an unforeseen object — **the snow can hide objects in your path causing a major safety issue**.

#6. Stay Active Year-Round

Strong muscles will help maintain your balance on all walking surfaces, including ice and snow. If you don't feel safe or physically well enough to go for a brisk walk; swimming or water aerobics is a popular option for seniors as it's gentle on the joints while building strength, endurance and joint flexibility. Most recreation centres also offer fitness classes geared towards seniors throughout the year.



Black ice is often not visible to the eye. Remember to salt your walkway to prevent slips and falls

CHAPTER 02

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM HYPOTHERMIA

Protect Yourself From Hypothermia

While outside may look like a winter wonderland with glistening snow-capped trees and children playing out in the powdery white stuff, the dip of mercury can cause serious, even life-threatening health problems for seniors who are ill-prepared.

The most common ailment that comes hand-in-hand with prolonged exposure to the winter elements is **hypothermia** — a condition that occurs when the body can no longer produce more heat than it is losing.



Dan Chrismeister, [Flickr](#)

While there's no reason for seniors to stay housebound this winter, it is important to bundle up to avoid frostbite or hypothermia.

“Many falsely assume that they are safe from hypothermia; that it's only a risk for those living up North, which is simply not true.”

Even when temperatures are under 10°C, hypothermia can rear its ugly head. **In fact, hypothermia even can strike if you are indoors.** Every winter, there are thousands of seniors who end up in the hospital from hypothermia because they cannot afford adequate heating or fail to get basic repairs done. Don't make this fatal mistake.

While hypothermia can strike anyone...

≈28,000 people are killed from it every year



...according to The National Institute of Aging

The older you are, the more difficult it can be to differentiate a drop in body heat as most seniors tend to produce less body heat than young people.

Beware: The Symptoms of Hypothermia

(Courtesy of [Canada Safety Council](#))

Initial Signs (Mild Hypothermia)

- Bouts of shivering
- Grogginess and muddled thinking
- Breathing and pulse are normal



How to Treat Mild Hypothermia, [eHow](#)
Hypoglycemia is also found in many hypothermic patients.

Danger Signs of Worsening Hypothermia (Moderate Hypothermia)

- Violent shivering or shivering stops
- Inability to think and pay attention
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Slow, weak pulse



The victim becomes pale. Lips, ears, fingers and toes may become blue.

Signs of Severe Hypothermia

- Shivering has stopped
- Unconsciousness
- Little or no breathing
- Weak, irregular or non-existent pulse



Cellular metabolic processes shut down. Major organs fail. Clinical death occurs.

6 Safety Precautions Against Hypothermia

Tip #1. Wear a Warm Hat

A warm woolly hat will keep your body temperature up and help keep hypothermia at bay. For double duty, option for one that covers your ears.



Keep warm in multiple layers when you're out in the cold.

Tip #3. Stay Indoors

If the weather outside is rather frightful, option to stay indoors unless it's absolutely necessary to leave home.



Tuques, trapper hats, and beanies that are made out of wool will keep you head warm.

Tip #2. Layer, Layer, and Layer

You'll trap more warm air against your skin with multiple layers than with a single thick layer. Also, if one layer becomes wet it's easy to remove it if you find yourself feeling rather toasty.



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Lizee's Secret Garden, [Blogspot](#)

Tip #4. Stay Dry

If you get caught off guard by the winter elements, it is vital that you change into warm, dry clothing as soon as possible. This time of year, it's always a good idea to pack an extra change of socks with you on your travels.



Remember to wear warm protective gears for your hands and feet to prevent hypothermia.



A good quality waterproof winter jacket may just protect you from hypothermia.

Tip #5. Protect Your Feet and Hands

Keep your hands warm at all times when you are outside or driving with a good pair of mittens. Did you know that mittens are more effective than gloves at keeping your hands warm? Since mittens keep your fingers in closer contact with one another they generate more body heat.

Tip #6. Throw a Warm Blanket in the Car

In the event that your car should break down or get stuck in the snow, a blanket will keep you warm and fight hypothermia from creeping in before the tow truck arrives. Instead of storing it in your trunk, leave it on your back seat for easy access.



You'll never know. The car might just break down in a snowstorm.

CHAPTER 03

DON'T LET THE FROST BITE

Don't Let the Frost Bite

Baby it's cold outside, which is why you really don't want Jack Frost nipping at your nose, or any other body part for that matter. While anyone exposed to icy-cold temperatures can catch frostbite, seniors — especially those with diabetes and prediabetes are at an increased risk.

Diabetes itself doesn't cause frostbite, however, it does cause damage to the nerve endings— this can impair one's ability to feel the pain that comes from too much cold. If you do suspect frostbite, seek medical help immediately.



Depending on the degree, frostbite can cause irreparable damage to your skin.

The do's and don'ts when treating frostbites:

Do's

- Move to a warmer place
- Wrap the affected areas in sterile dressings separately (if immediate medical help is available)
- Soak the affected areas in warm (never hot) water — or repeatedly apply warm cloths (if immediate care is not available)
- Move thawed areas as little as possible
- Warm drinks to replace lost fluids

Don'ts

- Do NOT thaw out a frostbitten area if it cannot be kept thawed
- Do NOT use direct dry heat
- Do NOT rub or massage the affected area
- Do NOT disturb blisters on frostbitten skin
- Do NOT smoke or drink alcoholic beverages during recovery

CHAPTER 04

PREVENT CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) POISONING

Prevent Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

The cool weather may indicate that it's time for cozy sweaters, hot chocolate and festive cheer, but it's also a reminder to have one's furnaces and other fuel-burning appliances in their home inspected by authorized service personnel to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

Often dubbed the 'silent killer,' carbon monoxide is difficult to detect as it is odourless, tasteless and toxic. When it is inhaled, it quickly inhibits the blood's capacity to transport oxygen throughout the body. **Carbon monoxide is dangerous to anyone who inhales the substance**, but children and the elderly are the most susceptible to its effects.



Be sure to know when carbon monoxide levels are too high - it can threaten your respiratory system.

There are two ways seniors can prevent carbon monoxide emergencies in their home this winter:

#1. Install Carbon Monoxide Detector

This will alert you to the presence of this deadly gas — make sure you check batteries regularly.

#2. Educate Yourself on the Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

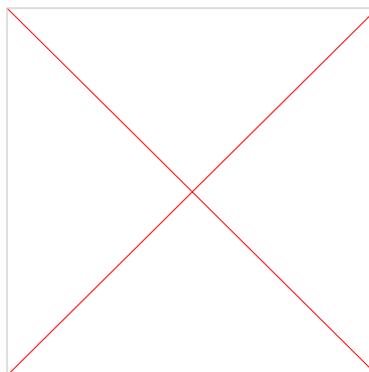
Symptoms can range from disorientation and nausea to frequent headaches.

CHAPTER 05

KEEP WINTER BLUES AT BAY

Keep Winter Blues at Bay

Do you feel lethargic, unmotivated and depressed during the winter months? Every year, thousands of Canadian seniors report feeling down in the winter — the combination of being stuck indoors, loneliness and not enough sunlight are all common factors that can trigger **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)**.



Avoid Seasonal Affective Disorder by keeping family close to you.

Some of the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder include:

- feeling depressed
- loss of energy
- weight gain
- oversleeping
- anxiety
- heavy 'leaden' feeling in the arms or legs
- loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed

It is normal to have some days when you feel down, but if you find yourself with any of the listed symptoms, **make sure you speak to your doctor and surround yourself with loved ones** — even when you don't feel up to visitors.

While it's important to take the extra precaution to winterize yourself and your home for weather-related emergencies, it's also **vital to reach out to others for assistance**. If family members and friends are unavailable to help or live out of town, don't be afraid to reach out to a neighbour, in-home care provider or other medical professional. It's always better to be safe than sorry — no matter what Mother Earth has on her agenda.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Our Mission:

[Safe Step Walk-In Tub Co.](#) is committed to empowering North America's senior citizens, as well as those individuals suffering from the effects of disability and mobility impairment.

Our primary concern is the health, safety, and comfort of our customers by offering a domestically produced, walk-in bathtub and a walk-in shower, that creates independence, self sufficiency and increased health and wellness; while maintaining a lower than average price that includes many luxurious features, home installation, and the best warranty in the industry.

We are constantly exploring new avenues to assist our customers in this quest.

For more helpful resources, follow us here!



Safety Never Felt So Good...