



## Walk and be seen!

- Short winter days force many walkers to exercise in the dark of the morning or evening. Wear clothing with reflective strips, a reflective vest or adding ankle and wrist reflectors bands to your current gear. You can't wear too much reflective gear.
- You can eliminate the stress and dangers of walking in the dark by moving temporarily to an indoor track or joining a mall walking group.
- Watch for cars as they may have trouble seeing you in the winter. Snow banks, falling snow or rain and blocked sidewalk can make it a challenge.



## How to walk on ice



Facing an icy surface can be a paralyzing experience. Not everyone has grippers and other safety aids. So, what should you do if it's impossible to avoid an icy patch? Believe it or not, body movements can increase your stability on an icy surface.

- First, slow down and think about your next move. Keeping your body as loose as possible, spread your feet to more than a foot apart to provide a base of support. This will help stabilize you as you walk.
- Next, keep your knees loose and don't let them lock. If you can, let them bend a bit. This will keep your centre of gravity lower to the ground, which further stabilizes the body.
- Now you are ready to take a step. Make the step small, placing your whole foot down at once. Then shift your weight very slowly to this foot and bring your other foot to meet it the same way. Keep a wide base of support.
- Some people prefer to drag their feet or shuffle them. If this feels better to you, then do so. Just remember to place your whole foot on the ice at once and keep your base of support approximately one foot wide.
- Of course, it's always better to avoid tricky situations by being prepared and planning a safe route for your walk.

Reference: Canada Safety Council

VISIT [WWW.HNHU.ORG](http://WWW.HNHU.ORG) TO MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY MORE WALKABLE.



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## Benefits of walking

Walking is one of the easiest and most enjoyable forms of exercise.

- Strengthens bones.
- Lowers blood pressure.
- Improves mood and gives you a break.
- Relieves stress and tension.
- Reduces risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis.
- Improves digestion and elimination.

All you need is a good pair of shoes, comfortable clothing and desire!

## Dress for the weather

In extremely cold conditions, being chilled can make any outdoor workout miserable and can lead to hypothermia in the worst case scenario.

- Walkers typically need more layers of clothing. Dress in layers. Wear something waterproof for your top layer and remove the inside layers first.
- Wear appropriate footwear for the weather (i.e. something warm, waterproof, long boots if there is deep snow, good tread for slippery days).
- Wear a scarf/neck warmer, hat and gloves. On the coldest of days, pull on a balaclava to protect your face.
- Wear sunscreen. Sunlight reflects off snow and ice. You can still get a sunburn and cause damage to your skin in the winter.
- Replace your wet clothes with dry ones. This will keep you warm and comfortable.

## Walking in the winter

When the mercury plummets and the snow starts to fall, even the most dedicated walker can be tempted to hibernate for the season. Canada's winters are long, but they shouldn't keep you from enjoying nature and getting exercise. Use the following tips – along with a bit of caution and common sense – to manage winter's greatest hazards and keep moving all season long.

## Be safe

When the winter air is crisp and the ground is covered with snow, there's nothing like taking a walk to enjoy the beauty of the season – and walking is one of the best ways to keep fit. On the other hand, winter can be a challenging time of year to get out and about. Freezing rain, icy surfaces and piles of hard-packed snow pose a hazard for the innocent pedestrian.

According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, almost 12,000 Ontarians visited an emergency room in 2002–2003 after falling on ice. Over half of the incidents took place in January and February.

Just one bad fall on ice can have long-term consequences. These include chronic pain in the affected area; a disabling injury that may mean loss of independence; or fear of another fall, which discourages a healthy, active lifestyle.

A few simple measures can make it safer to walk outdoors in the winter. Removing snow and ice, putting sand or salt on areas where people walk, and wearing the right footwear all make a big difference. Also consider the following:

- Let others know where you are going and/or walk with a friend.
- Ice can be present. Consider a trekking pole (looks like a ski pole) with a carbide tip that chunks into the ice.

- Carry a small bag of grit, sand or non-clumping cat litter in your jacket pocket or handbag to sprinkle when you are confronted with icy sidewalks, steps, bus stops, etc.
- Dehydration. Our normal sense of thirst lets us down in winter, but we must keep drinking water.
- Sun protection is still required. The cool weather will try to fool you, but use that sun screen, at least SPF 15, and most authorities recommend even higher.
- Hike with a group or at least a friend.
- Pack your pack with a few additional items to add more comfort and safety to the hike: a first aid kit, an extra layer of clothing for when you stop, some snacks, a spare set of socks and mitts, rain pants and some lip protection. Carry a map and a flashlight, matches and a cell phone.
- Choose routes that aren't open and exposed. Walk in the shelter of a forest or alongside rows of large wind-blocking buildings. When you can't avoid the wind, start by walking into it so you finish with it at your back pushing you home.

Reference: Hike Ontario Fact Sheet 17

