

# **BEST FOOT FORWARD – DON'T LET A FALL GET YOU DOWN**

## **Reduce Your Health Risks**

**Your physical health can affect your risk of tripping, slipping and falling. For example, some medications can affect your alertness, judgment and coordination. Skipping meals and not drinking enough water can make you lightheaded and unsteady on your feet - especially in the hot summer months and after exercise. Poor eyesight can lead to dangerous stumbles. The good news is there are many simple things you can do to reduce your risk of an injury from falling.**

### **Medications**

Talk to your MD or pharmacist about any prescription medicines, over-the-counter products or herbal supplements you may be taking. Products can interact with each other, so it's important to talk to your health professional about all of the things you are taking. Some medicines and supplements can cause dizziness, weakness or other side-effects that may increase your risk of slipping, tripping and falling. Advice from a health professional can reduce your risk.



### **Eyes and Ears**

Your eyes and ears protect you from falling. For example, your eyesight and hearing alert you to hazards such as traffic. Have your eyes and ears tested at least once every two years, preferably every year. Remember to take off your reading glasses when you are walking and wear your hearing aid if you need one.

### **Feet Hurt?**

Foot problems such as bunions, callouses, ingrown toenails and plantar warts contribute to unsteadiness. If your feet hurt, you are probably walking gingerly to avoid the sore spots. A chiropractor can assess your gait – the way you walk – and prescribe orthotics for your shoes if needed. Always wear good fitting, supportive shoes with non-slip soles. A podiatrist can also help correct many problems.

### **Eating Well**

Skipping meals can cause dizziness and weakness. Eat regular, nutritious meals to stay alert and steady. It's equally important to drink enough non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated beverages.



### **How's Your Health?**

Health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, anaemia and low blood sugar can contribute to feelings of dizziness and faintness. Talk to your health professional about what you can do to manage the symptoms of these types of conditions.

### **Stay Active**

Being active is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of falls. Active people get more physical exercise and are more mentally alert. Social activities, sports and clubs all keep you on the move – and that's good for your physical strength, balance and perception. Try to get at least 20 minutes of exercise at least three times a week – preferably every day. Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults is a good source of information. You can find it on the Health Canada website [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

### **Practice Moderation**

Know your limits and watch your alcohol consumption. Alcohol affects your sight, hearing, balance and judgment. Alone or in combination with medications, drinking too much can lead to serious falls.