



# Tips for Winter Walking

**There is nothing like taking a walk to enjoy the beauty of the season — and walking is one of the best ways to keep healthy. On the other hand, winter can be a challenging time of year to get out and about.** Icy surfaces and snow can pose a hazard for pedestrians, especially for seniors and people using a mobility device. A fall can mean a painful injury and sometimes long-term consequences, including chronic pain or a disabling condition that may mean loss of independence. Fear of another fall discourages an active lifestyle and can lead to isolation and a fear of going out.

Whether you are walking for pleasure or with a dog or to get to a needed destination, here are some tips for safer walking outdoors in winter.

## 1

### Plan ahead.

Check the weather before you go. Give yourself extra travel time so you can walk without being rushed.



## 2

### Choose a good pair of winter boots.

For warmth and stability look for these features: well-insulated, waterproof, thick non-slip tread sole made of natural rubber, wide low heels, light-weight.



## 3

**Consider wearing ice grippers** when walking on packed snow and ice. Before buying the grippers, be sure that you can easily attach and remove them from your boots (or keep them on a pair you only use for outdoor walking). Most grippers become dangerously slippery when you step indoors and must be removed before walking on smooth surfaces such as stone, tile and ceramic.



**4 Use supports to increase stability.** Use handrails when available and steady yourself on the door frame of a vehicle when getting in and out. Nordic (urban) walking poles with tips that dig in on icy surfaces can also help. Take some instruction on how to use these poles.



**5 Be cautious in all temperatures.** In cold temperatures, assume that all wet, dark areas on pavements are slippery and icy.

**6 Look for good traction.** If you encounter a snow- or ice-covered sidewalk or driveway, especially on a hill, travel along its edge for traction.



**7 Increase your centre of gravity and stability.** Do the Penguin Shuffle: point your feet out slightly like a penguin and take small steps while walking on slippery surfaces. Keep your knees loose — let them bend a bit. Place your whole foot down at once—this breaks through a crusty surface and also slows your walking speed.

**8 Keep your balance.** Walk with your arms swinging at your sides. Keep your hands out of your pockets (remember your gloves).



**9 Stay on maintained routes.** Walk on walkways, paths and sidewalks that receive winter maintenance. Taking shortcuts over snow piles and other frozen areas can be hazardous.



**10 Salt or sand** your stairs, driveway or walkway. Make use of grit boxes in public places.



**Call 3-1-1 to report hazardous pedestrian conditions.**

Be a snow mole and help us report on winter walking conditions.



Go to [www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles](http://www.coaottawa.ca/snowmoles) for full information and the snow mole audit questionnaire.

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