



Be Injury Free

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Welcome to Be Injury Free.

This issue of our *Health Issues Newsletter* provides you with information, resource links, and practical tips on how to reduce your risk of injury. Topics include safe medicine cabinet cleanout, wearing proper footwear, reducing the risk of falls, and being safe around the home.

Injuries are a real problem within our society, but many are preventable. In fact, “preventable injury is the leading cause of death for Canadians aged one to 44, and claims more lives in Canada than all other causes combined.”

In hopes to reduce the amount of preventable injuries, this issue discusses how to create and promote safe environments within the workplace, in their own homes, and life outside of work.

COMING SOON! Look out for the next initiative to learn about heart health and how to live a healthier lifestyle.

The Shoes You Choose Preventing Falls related Injuries

Everyone is at risk of falling, regardless of age. However, young children and older adults are more likely to experience injury because of a fall. In Canada, there were 1,714,000 injuries caused by falling in 2009. Injuries from falling often lead to disability, loss of confidence and independence, and depression. The good news is that you can help prevent certain falls by selecting and wearing proper footwear.

Finding Balance and Stability

The human foot works to provide support and balance. Balance is your ability to stay upright while standing and walking. Stability is your ability to maintain balance when something throws you off. An important aspect of stability is that the larger the base of support, the lower the risk of falling. The sole of your shoe provides a base of support, making it important to select shoes that add to stability. Selecting properly fitted shoes can help achieve this, which helps prevent falls.

Nowadays it is rare for people to have their shoes fitted by an experienced shoe fitter. This means many shoes may not be a perfect fit for the wearer and the type of shoe chosen may not be appropriate for the intended environment or activity. To improve stability, heels should be 2 cm, or the height of your toes. The width of the shoes' sole and heel also contribute to stability. Shoes with laces and hard soles provide more support than slip-ons. Finally, good tread on the sole helps to prevent slips and trips.

Tips for Buying Properly Fitted Shoes

When choosing footwear, it is important to be mindful of how you will be using the shoes. Consider the shoes' size, design, and function. Follow these tips when buying shoes:



- Proper fit: Different brands and types of shoes come in varying lengths, widths, and shapes. With that in mind, it is important to measure and test each pair, and each shoe in the pair, to see if they fit.
- Suitable for environment: Choose appropriate shoes for your activity. Shoes for the workplace require different levels of protection and tread than shoes for running, or walking on a trail.
- Sturdy design: Soft shoes may feel comfortable on your feet but they do not provide the required stability. Shoes with laces are sturdier and provide a better fit than slip-ons.

When choosing footwear, think about staying safe on your feet. Your shoes play an important role in providing balance and stability. So, make sure to select and wear the right shoes for the activity that you will be doing. You can prevent injuries by choosing shoes that provide support and stability you need.

In Canada, there were 1, 714,000 injuries caused by falling in 2009.

Brining Safety Home

Whether we are at work or at home, safety should be a priority. Did you know that household chores, outdoor yard maintenance, and home renovation combined were the second most common cause of injury after sports among Canadians aged 12 years or older? Read on for tips on how you and those you care about can prevent injuries at home.

Household Chores

Household chores include tasks like cooking, cleaning and doing laundry. You can take simple steps to reduce the chances of injury when performing these tasks.

Practice the following safety tips when cooking:

- Do not leave your cooking appliances unattended when preparing food.
- Avoid using cooking appliances if you are under the influence of alcohol, recreational drugs, or taking medication that makes you drowsy.
- Use a timer to remind you to switch off the oven or burner.
- Keep cooking appliances clean.
- Wear suitable clothing when cooking. Avoid loose long sleeves.

Cleaning often involves use of household chemicals which can cause injury if not used properly. Avoid mixing household cleaning products as that could lead to a dangerous reaction such as an explosion or release of harmful gas. All chemical products sold in Canada including products for household use have a label with instructions on safe use, storage, and guidelines on disposal; do not burn or re-use empty chemical containers. Keep all household chemical products in original containers and out of reach of young children.

Home Renovation & Yard Maintenance

Plan ahead when taking on home renovation and outdoor maintenance projects. Ensure that you have all the necessary tools and equipment and that they are in good condition, including personal protective equipment. Read and follow instructions



on proper use of equipment before beginning, and seek professional help for tasks that you are not qualified to perform. When working outdoors with power equipment (e.g. lawnmower) clear the working areas of sticks, stones and other objects to prevent flying objects hitting and hurting anyone.

It is important to understand the risks associated with household chores, renovations, and yard maintenance. Taking steps to manage or remove hazards can go a long way to keeping you and your family safe at home. For more information on home safety, click here to visit the [Healthy Canadian website](#).

SNOWMOBILE SAFELY THIS WINTER

Snowmobiling is a popular and enjoyable winter activity often shared among families and friends. However, it is not without risk. Indeed, during 2014 and 2015, 1,127 Canadians visited hospital emergency rooms due to snowmobile-related injuries. The risks include being injured by losing control of the snowmobile or roll-over, hitting something (like a tree or another snowmobile), or being struck by another vehicle. *Here are some general safety guidelines you should consider before heading out.*

WHO SHOULD RIDE?

Riders should be trained, mature and strong enough to operate a snowmobile.

- Those under 16 years of age should not operate snowmobiles. The combination of their physical size and psychological development put them at higher-risk for injuries.
- Children under the age of 6 should not ride as passengers. They do not have the strength and stamina to hold on as a passenger for long periods of time. This puts them at risk to fall off the machine.

KNOW THE CONDITIONS!

- Before going out, check the weather forecast and know the conditions of the route you plan to take. Wear appropriate clothing to prevent hypothermia.
- Before snowmobiling on ice, ensure it is thick enough and is in good condition.

Other Safety Requirements • **Drivers and passengers should wear appropriate CSA approved helmets.**

- Do not operate a snowmobile while impaired or allow passengers that are impaired to ride.
- Do not pull people behind a snowmobile, for example on a toboggan or skis.
- Slow down. Excessive speed puts you and your passenger at greater risk of injury if you run into hidden hazards. Snowmobiles do not speed-up or slow-down like cars.
- Bring a small emergency kit with flares and your cell phone.
- Keep headlights and tail lights on at all times to make you more visible.

For more information on legal requirements, visit the Ministry of Transportation website for specific regulations within your province. Every province has its own rules



and regulations for snowmobiles. Last but not least, be responsible, stay safe, and enjoy the ride this winter.

ALCOHOL-RELATED INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED!

Alcohol consumption is a well-known risk factor for self-injury, violence, impaired driving, and unintentional injury. Alcohol intoxication impairs motor functioning causing imbalance and slowed reaction times. It can also impair one's judgement leading to riskier behaviours that can result in violence or self-harm. Injuries associated with alcohol use have been estimated to cost Ontario \$440 million each year. This is a combination of both direct healthcare costs and indirect costs of lost productivity.

STAY SAFE - DRINKING ALCOHOL IS A RISK

It's important to remember that everyone is at risk for alcohol related injuries. Whether it's through one's own drinking, or a result of others drinking, the consequences can be deadly. In fact, in the year 2002, motor vehicle crashes and suicides were the second and third leading cause of alcohol related deaths in Canada.

If you choose to drink alcohol, Canada's Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines can help reduce your risk of injuring yourself and others. These guidelines recommend no more than ten standard drinks a week for women, with no more than two drinks a day; and fifteen standard drinks a week for men, with no more than three drinks a day.

DON'T DRINK OR DRINK RESPONSIBLY

Avoid consuming alcohol in situations where there is a high risk of injury. For example, when you are using or operating dangerous tools or machinery; taking medications such as sedatives or painkillers; taking care of others; during any sports or other physical activities; driving a motor vehicle; or swimming. Be mindful of the effects of alcohol on your body. Know how you react to it and take the necessary precautions to stay safe. For instance, if you plan on going out and drinking, make sure you have a plan on how to get home safely.

DRINK SAFER

If you choose to drink, follow these tips to drink safer and reduce your risk of injury and self-harm:

1. Set a drink limitation for yourself and stick to it.
2. Try to have no more than two drinks in a three-hour period.
3. Eat before and during the time you are drinking.
4. Take your age, body weight and health problems into consideration when drinking because it may suggest lower limits.

If you think alcohol may be negatively affecting your life, there are many supports available. For a free 24-hour hotline that is confidential and anonymous and connects you to programs in your community, call Connex Ontario (1-800-565-8603).



HOW SAFE IS YOUR MEDICATION?

Nearly 41% of Canadians report currently using at least one prescription medication to manage a medical condition. Most people will have a place in their homes where they store these products and other over-the-counter medications. Prescribed medications can be very helpful when used as intended. However, the improper storage and usage of them can result in very serious and sometimes deadly, consequences.

Prescription drug abuse is a growing health and safety problem in Canada, especially amongst youth aged 15-24. Medications, including those that are expired, can also result in accidental poisoning. By safely securing, monitoring, and disposing of medication it is possible for you to protect yourself and your family from this hazard. *Nearly 41% of Canadians report currently using at least one prescription medication to manage a medical condition.*

By following these simple safety tips you can help ensure you and your family will be safe from accidental poisoning or medication misuse.

Secure:

- Medications should be stored in a locked cabinet, drawer, or safe to prevent unauthorized access.
- Do not carry medications in your purse, briefcase, or car.

Monitor:

- Make sure you keep track of your prescription drugs by counting the amount of pills in each package.
- Monitor any refills at the pharmacy and make sure they were all filled by you.
- Avoid sharing medication with family or friends, even if you use the same medication for a similar condition.

Dispose:

- Clear your medicine cabinet at least twice a year of all expired and unused prescription medication, over the counter drugs, as well as any natural health products including vitamins. Local pharmacies will take unused or expired medication and safely dispose of them. Police departments and municipalities also organize medication take-back programs.
- Never flush medication down the toilet or the sink! This can have very serious effects on our environment, which can in turn harm our health.

For more information on how to store and dispose of medications, please visit Health Canada's website on Prescription Medication safety.

OLDER ADULTS & FALLS

Not Just A Part of The Aging Process

Most people experience falls, and though the risk of falling increases with age, it is not a normal part of aging. Canada's 65+ population is growing at about four times



the growth rate of the total population, so it is important to be aware that falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries in this age category. Managing the risk of falls for both you and older loved ones or neighbours can help keep everyone safe and healthy.

Over half of all falls take place at home. Many of these are caused by simple but serious hazards (e.g., clutter, throw rugs, poor lighting). Others can be prevented by making some basic changes. For example, adding grab bars in the bathroom, applying non-slip paint on outdoor steps, wearing proper footwear both inside and out, and using walking aids if needed (i.e., walker or a cane).

Other factors often related to aging increase the risk of a fall, including poor balance, bad vision, previous falls, and chronic medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, stroke, arthritis). There are many things that can be done to prevent falls and are within our control to change. For example:

- **Keep active** - You are less likely to fall if you have strong muscles and good balance. Participate in regular exercise to help restore strength and flexibility.
- **Have your eyes checked once a year** - Good vision can reduce your risk of falling. Make sure you have a current prescription and are using the glasses as advised by the eye doctor.
- **Manage your medications** – Some medications may make you feel drowsy, dizzy, or unsteady on your feet. Talk to your doctor about possible side effects and take all medication as prescribed.
- **Make your home safer** – Falls are often due to issues that are easy to overlook but also easy to fix. Do a home safety check for yourself or an older loved one - look for hazards that could lead to a fall.

A fall usually happens when more than one risk factor is involved. For example, walking down your hallway during the day, there is little chance of falling. However, if you are rushing down the same hallway to get to the bathroom in the middle of the night without a nightlight, and clutter on the floor, the chance of falling increases. Falls can result in life changes, including loss of independence, lengthy hospital stays, and even death. Reducing your risk of falls, as well as helping to ensure the safety of aging parents, grandparents, or neighbours, is a great way to encourage health and independence as long as possible.

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THE SHOES YOU CHOOSE

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BRINGING SAFETY HOME

[Click here to visit the Fire Prevention Canada. Home Safety.](#)





[Click here to access the Government of Canada, Health Canada and the Public health Agency of Canada. Household chemical safety. Website.](#)

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Canadian Institute for Health Information. Cause of sport and winter injury hospitalizations by recipient province/territory. 2014-2015 Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). Ottawa: CIHI, 2016.

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ALCOHOL-RELATED INJURIES CAN BE PREVENTED!

[Click here to access the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research website. \(2013\). Take action to prevent alcohol-related injuries.](#)

[Click here to access the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. \(2013\). Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. Online](#)

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OLDER ADULTS & FALLS – NOT JUST A PART OF THE AGING PROCESS

Click here to access the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(2014\) Seniors falls in Canada, Second Report.](#)

Detailed references available for each article upon request.

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