

MOVE TO BE STRONG!



DECEMBER 2023

'Tis the season of slippery sidewalks and snowfalls. The cold winter months may make it more daunting to go outside and get fresh air. Being mindful of the weather and taking simple precautions makes staying active possible during any season.

Tips to avoid slips:

- Proper footwear
- Walk like a penguin
- Salting sidewalks, carry a baggie of salt with you
- Check the weather
- Proper use of assistive devices such as walkers, canes, Nordic poles

Tips for staying active during the winter:

- Walking buddy
- Community parks and pathways
- Mall walking
- Seasonal gym memberships
- Local active lifestyle centres
- Join a live, virtual VON SMART exercise class
- Move while watching TV by doing sit-to-stands or marching during commercial breaks

The VON SMART Program

Helping to keep our community dwelling older adults active, engaged and free from falls!

For more information about SMART exercise classes and fall prevention workshops please contact:

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12 DAYS OF FITMAS!

Staying active during the holiday season can be festive and fun!

The Fitmas tree to the right offers some exercise ideas that you can try during the month of December. While there are only 12 exercise bulbs, you can repeat the exercises throughout the month or come up with some of your own.

Throw on some timeless Christmas tunes and invite your family and friends to join you in movement!

There is no time like the "present" to celebrate all the benefits physical activity and exercise offer us throughout the seasons.



On behalf of our VON SMART Exercise and Fall Prevention Team, I'd like to offer a note of gratitude to our SMART participants and partners for a memorable and successful 2023! Our growing community of fitness friends is stronger than ever as we continue to stay active and engaged in ageing well and preventing falls.

Khrista Boon, District Program Supervisor – VON SMART



Did You Know?

(Cold Weather Safety)

Cold Weather Safety for Older Adults



If you are like most people, you feel cold every now and then during the winter. What you may not know is that just being really cold can make you very sick.

Older adults can lose body heat fast—faster than when they were young. Changes in your body that come with aging can make it harder for you to be aware of getting cold. A big chill can turn into a dangerous problem before an older person even knows what's happening.

Hypothermia is what happens when your body temperature gets very low. For an older person, a body temperature of 95°F or lower can cause many health problems, such as a heart attack, kidney problems, liver damage, or worse.

Being outside in the cold, or even being in a very cold house, can lead to hypothermia. Try to stay away from cold places, and pay attention to how cold it is where you are. You can take steps to lower your chance of getting hypothermia.

People who are sick may have special problems keeping warm. Do not let it get too cold inside and dress warmly. Even if you keep your temperature between 60°F and 65°F, your home or apartment may not be warm enough to keep you safe. This is a special problem if you live alone because there is no one else to feel the chilliness of the house or notice if you are having symptoms of hypothermia.

Here are some tips for keeping warm while you're inside:

- Set your heat to at least 68–70°F.
- Make sure your house isn't losing heat through windows.
- Dress warmly on cold days even if you are staying in.
- When you go to sleep, wear long underwear under your pajamas, and use extra covers.
- Make sure you eat enough food to keep up your weight.
- Drink alcohol moderately, if at all. Alcoholic drinks can make you lose body heat.
- Ask family or friends to check on you during cold weather. If a power outage leaves you without heat, try to stay with a relative or friend.

VON SMART Instructor Feature!



WELCOME ALEXIS!

Hi everyone! My name is Alexis, and I recently started as a Fitness Instructor with VON. I am very excited about this new position!

I recently completed my Social Service Worker Gerontology Diploma, and I am in my 2nd year of the Social Work program at the University.

I am a live-in caregiver for my grandmother with dementia. I am also an avid animal lover.

I have been working in the field of Gerontology for over 4 years, continuously expanding my knowledge in this area. More specifically, I have learned the importance of exercise and movement in daily life. I am looking forward to meeting everyone face to face!

Resources

McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

WATCH YOUR STEP! FALL PREVENTION FOR SENIORS LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

(mcmasteroptimalaging.org)



For older adults, the risk of falling is very real. In fact, nearly 20% of older adults in Canada who live at home reported at least one fall in 2008/2009, while over 250,000 reported an injury related to falls in 2009/2010.

There are many reasons why older adults fall, including chronic conditions, balance problems, poor vision, cognitive impairment, side effects from medications, improper footwear, and previous falls. With so many factors threatening to knock older adults off their feet, the fear of falling is no laughing matter. Fortunately, there are things you can do to keep your feet safely on the ground. Exercise, for example, is well known to prevent falls in long-term care homes. But what can exercise do for the 92% of older adults in Canada living independently in the community?

What the research tells us

It turns out that exercise – alone or in combination with other strategies – can help reduce the chance that older adults living in the community will fall.

One systematic review found that exercise alone – carried out 3 times per week for about 12 months– may lower the risk of falls generally, and specifically falls that lead to injuries. Most studies evaluated strategies focused on improving walking speed, balance, and muscle strength. Beneficial exercises included tai chi, resistance training, and exercises aimed at improving flexibility. While exercise was sometimes associated with minor pain, bruising, or fall-related injuries/fractures, it did not increase the risk of serious injuries.

Another systematic review and meta analysis also showed that exercise alone or combined with other strategies prevented falls, and particularly falls leading to injuries. Strategies such as orthotics, hip protectors, patient quality improvement initiatives (i.e. self-management, education), and environmental assessment and modification activities, when combined with exercise, were all found to reduce the risk of experiencing a fall.

More so, the risk of more serious falls leading to injury was reduced when exercise was combined with vision tests and treatment, and when these two strategies were combined with efforts to eliminate risk factors from one's environment. Unfortunately, the results of the review also indicated that exercise combined with certain strategies could lead to an increased risk of falling, as well as increased risk of an injury as a result of a fall. This heightened risk in some individuals could stem from their increased ability to move around as a result of exercising, however, any risk should be balanced with the need to improve mobility.

For older adults still living at home, falling should not be considered inevitable. There are many things you can do to keep your feet firmly planted on the ground. Exercise may be an excellent option, but you should speak with your health care provider, and consider your own values and preferences, when deciding which strategy is best for you.

VON Updates

NO CLASSES DECEMBER 25TH & 26TH & JANUARY 1ST & 2ND

NOTE: some locations may take a longer holiday pause, check with your SMART instructor.



VON SMART Exercise & Fall Prevention

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