

# MOVE TO BE STRONG!



## VON SMART NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2021

### November is Fall Prevention Month

As we welcome November, we kick off another Fall Prevention Month. In this newsletter you will find statistics on falls and our older adult population, fall prevention tips, a home safety check list and a blog post that gives us 4 simple tips on how to avoid falls from McMaster University's Optimal Aging Portal. Some falls can be minor and result in no significant injury. However, after one fall without intervention we are likely to have another. Injurious falls can have a great impact on how older adults continue to live their lives. It is important to be aware that most falls are preventable and can be avoided by making simple changes in our environment, taking charge of our health and by staying active! Exercise is proven to be one of the most effective interventions to reduce our risk of experiencing a fall.

### 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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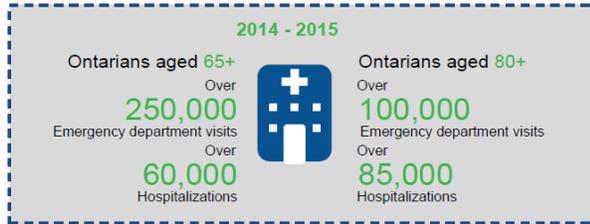


# Falls in Ontario

ADULTS 65+



UNINTENTIONAL FALLS ARE THE **LEADING CAUSE OF INJURY** FOR ONTARIANS AGED 65 & OVER.



## Common Types of Falls



These lead to almost 50% of emergency department visits and hospital admissions for fall injuries in 65+

It takes a community to prevent a fall. We all have a role to play.  
**What role will you play?**

Data Source: Ontario Injury Data Report (2018). Infographic adapted from Parachute by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation.

## When to See a Doctor

Whether you're the victim or the witness of a fall, never underestimate its seriousness. Even if it appears no harm was done, there could be after-effects.

## Here Are Some of the Reasons for Seeing a Doctor:

- loss of consciousness just before or after the fall
- injuries
- a strong or lingering pain
- dizziness
- nausea
- overall weakness or unsteadiness
- headaches
- vision problems
- drowsiness

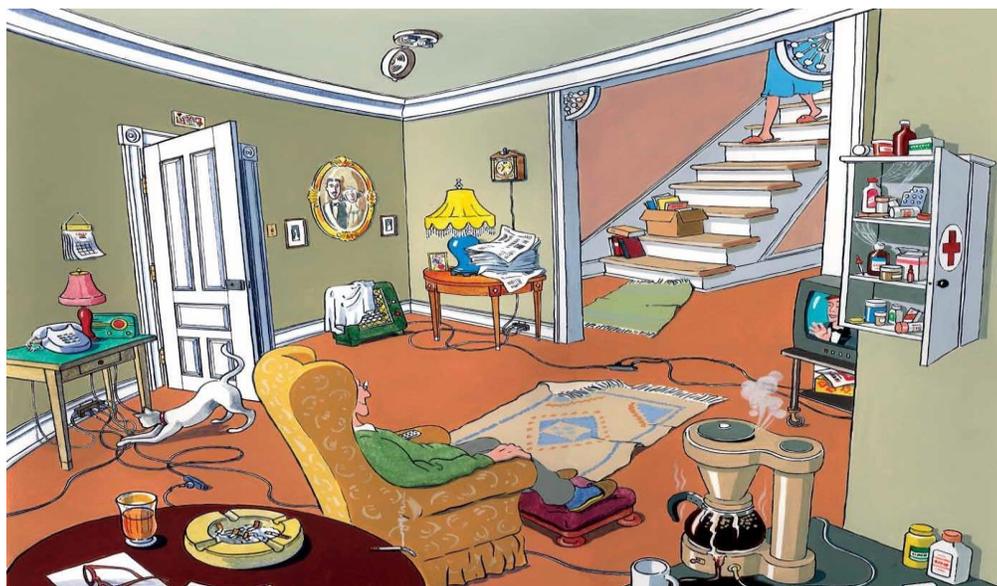
Symptoms may appear in the days that follow a fall. If you fall, take note of your condition. If you witness a fall, take note of the person's condition.

In some cases, a fall may be the sign of an illness, or it may be caused by medication. It's always better to mention falls to your doctor. He or she can then assess the situation and see if the fall is linked to an illness, prescribed medication or over-the-counter drugs.

[If You Fall or Witness a Fall, Do You Know What to Do? - Canada.ca](http://Canada.ca)

## CIRCLE ALL OF THE HOME HAZARDS THAT YOU SEE

Hint: There are 14 hazards in total



**STAY SAFE!**

### Did you know?

As we age, certain items in our home can begin to pose risks for falling; carpets, stairs, floors, and even pets can become hazardous. The positive news is that most falls are preventable and by completing a self-conducted home safety assessment you can help to identify possible areas for improvement or minor modifications.

#### Things to look for:

##### Inside the home

- Remove clutter
- Keep cords out of pathways
- Remove rugs that tend to slip
- Keep frequently used objects close by

##### Outside the home

- Paint the edges of outdoor steps
- Keep walkways clear & well-lit
- Clear snow & ice from entrances & sidewalks

##### Bathroom

- Add grab bars in showers, tub & toilet areas
- Use nonslip mat in the shower or tub
- Use an elevated toilet seat

##### Proper Lighting

- Have a lamp or light switch that you can reach from bed
- Use night lights
- Turn on the lights when you go into the house

### Reflection

Have you completed a home safety assessment? Is there anything in your home that can be improved to help lessen your risk of having a fall?



# FALLS ARE PREVENTABLE

## Resources

### McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

[Healthy Aging Research | McMaster Optimal Aging Portal](#)

[Avoid falls with these 4 simple tips](#)

[\[mcmasteroptimalaging.org\]](http://mcmasteroptimalaging.org)

Avoid falls with these 4 simple tips

Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations among Canadian seniors and 20% to 30% of people aged 65 and older suffer serious falls each year. Furthermore, older adults who fall once are more likely to fall again. Those are startling statistics and they represent a lot of injured people whose quality of life is also likely to take a nosedive.

You don't have to be one of them!

Maybe you've already made some changes to your home environment such as installing handrails and grab bars, improving lighting and removing items that can be a tripping hazard. That's wise, but don't stop there. Research shows these four simple changes to your physical health can also help you stay steady on your feet.

### 1. Build your strength

As we age our bodies often lose muscle mass and strength (a condition called sarcopenia) and the resulting weakness – particularly in the legs – is what makes us more likely to fall. But we can fight back by getting regular physical exercise that includes weight bearing activities to build and strengthen muscles.

One approach supported by research evidence is "high intensity progressive resistance strength training". It's not as complicated as it sounds: simply start exercising with a weight that is difficult but doable and increase the weight as it becomes easier.

Many different types of exercise are beneficial for building muscle mass, including working out in the pool and with elastic resistance bands.

Remember: the best type of exercise is one that you enjoy, as you are more likely to stick with it and see the benefits. What's more, exercise can also be combined with other falls prevention strategies—such as education or doing an environmental assessment and removing tripping hazards—to prevent falls.

## 2. Find your balance

A loss of balance is also common in older age, another reason seniors are at higher risk of falling. Once again, exercise is the remedy. Movements designed to improve balance and flexibility – including Pilates and exercises using the Nintendo Wii – can help us stand firm, or recover quickly if we begin to lose our footing. Tai chi is also recommended for its various benefits including improving strength and balance through slow controlled movements.

## 3. Take stock of your pill cupboard

With age comes wisdom... and often a lot more pills. Prescription and over-the-counter drugs serve a purpose, but side effects such as dizziness, disorientation and sleepiness could cause people to stumble and fall. As well, seniors who take multiple medications are at higher risk of health complications from drug interactions.

A medication review with your doctor or pharmacist helps to assess the benefits and risks of prescribed drugs and may result in some drugs being “deprescribed.” This means backing off when doses are too high or stopping medications that are no longer needed.

## 4. Consider seeing a podiatrist

Be it issues with your shoes or feet, being mindful of your foot health is an important part of the falls prevention process. Podiatry care, specifically multicomponent care (e.g., podiatrist care with advice, information, exercises, and footwear and/or orthotics) and multifaceted care (e.g., risk assessment by a diverse team of professionals and a referral to a podiatrist) may reduce falls in older adults.

Failure (to move) is not an option!

Many older adults believe the best way to protect themselves from falling and getting hurt is by stopping some or all of their physical activities. That might seem like a safe and sensible solution but it’s flawed for a few reasons. The less you move and exercise, the weaker and more frail you become, which *increases* your risk of falling. And life can end up being pretty dull for people who don’t get out much.

Instead, examine your exercise and other lifestyle routines and make some changes if necessary. It’s never too late – or too early – to work on making yourself more sure-footed and able to resist falls so you can get out and about with confidence.

## VON Updates and Support

The VON SMART Program continues to make Fall Prevention a priority for community dwelling older adults. We have different types of resources available for fall prevention education such as our Reflection Journals and Fall Prevention themed puzzles, hard copy exercise booklets, tablets with pre recorded exercise sessions and fall prevention education. We also continue to offer virtual or in person exercise classes and fall prevention workshops.



REMEMBRANCE DAY  
*Lest We Forget*

### VON SMART Exercise & Fall Prevention

Windsor-Essex | Chatham-Kent | Sarnia-Lambton

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