

MOVE TO BE STRONG!



VON SMART NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER 2021

Welcome Fall!

As we move through another season it is very important to be aware of potential fall risks with the changing weather. For example, falling leaves can cover walkways and present a potential slip hazard.

Exercise, diet and healthy sleep are key strategies to help us stay healthy this season! Exercise helps to keep us strong and is proven to reduce the risk for falls. A well-balanced diet can promote heart health and help to manage symptoms of chronic disease. A good night rest will allow your body to recover and repair itself and can also help to boost the immune system.

In preparation for Fall Prevention Month in November, on the next page of the newsletter, we have included a Falls Risk Self-Assessment Quiz. Take a moment to review the 13 questions and find out if you are at risk for 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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Am I at Risk for a Fall

Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults

Falls are the leading cause of injury among seniors. The older we get, the greater the risk of falling becomes. Our bodies naturally change with age, and these changes affect the way we feel, move, and behave.

A fall can have a devastating and lasting impact on an individual resulting in injury, chronic pain and a reduced quality of life. Even without an injury, a fall can cause a loss in confidence and a reduction in activities for older adults.

The good news is that there are actions you can take to prevent falls.

In preparation for fall prevention month please take a moment to review the questionnaire and see if you are at risk for a fall.

Remember Falls are Preventable

Are you at risk of falling?



Circle YES or NO for each statement, then tally your score below.

Steps to lower your risk of falling

Have you fallen in the last 6 months?	YES 2	NO 0	Learn more about how to lower your fall risk to prevent yourself from falling again.
Do you use, or have you been advised to use, a cane or walker to get around safely?	YES 2	NO 0	Talk with a physiotherapist to get the best walking aid for your needs.
Do you sometimes feel unsteady when you are walking?	YES 1	NO 0	Exercise to improve your strength and balance.
Do you have to steady yourself by holding onto furniture when walking at home?	YES 1	NO 0	Talk with a physiotherapist for exercises to improve your balance.
Do you worry about falling?	YES 1	NO 0	Talk to your healthcare provider if you are worried about falling, especially if it stops you from being active.
Do you need to push yourself up with your hands to stand up from a chair?	YES 1	NO 0	Do 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days a week. Strengthening your muscles can reduce your risk of falling.
Do you have trouble stepping up onto a curb?	YES 1	NO 0	Keep active to improve strength and balance.
Do you often have to rush to the toilet?	YES 1	NO 0	Talk with your doctor or health care provider about managing the need to rush to the toilet.
Have you lost any feeling in your feet?	YES 1	NO 0	Talk with your podiatrist or doctor because numbness in your feet can cause a fall.
Do you take medication to help you sleep or improve your mood?	YES 1	NO 0	Review your medications, vitamins, and supplements with your pharmacist or doctor yearly or if your prescription changes.
Do you take medication that sometimes makes you feel lightheaded or more tired than usual?	YES 1	NO 0	Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about medication side effects or causes of light-headedness.
Do you often feel sad or depressed?	YES 1	NO 0	Talk to your healthcare provider or doctor about how you are feeling.
Do you have difficulty avoiding hazards in your path because you don't see well?	YES 1	NO 0	Visit an eye doctor yearly to check your eye health.

Add up the number of points for each YES answer. If you scored 4 points or more, you may be at risk of falling.

TOTAL SCORE:

Talk to your healthcare provider or doctor for more information.

Did you know?

A healthy lifestyle not only includes exercise and a healthy diet – it also includes mental stimulation, or mindfulness. **Mindfulness** activities can be used to promote a healthy brain, by reducing stress and anxiety. Other benefits of mindfulness and meditation include a slower progression of memory-related diseases, improved digestion and a better mood. Mindfulness and meditation do not need to take all day—try to devote a few minutes per day to help clear your mind, and relax your body!

Here are a few simple exercises to help you start your mindfulness journey:

- **Mindful Breathing:** Sit or lie in a comfortable position with your eyes closed. Bring your awareness to your breath as you inhale and exhale. Notice how your body feels when you breathe in and out. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your thoughts back to your breathing.
- **Body Scan:** Start in your preferred comfortable position, sitting or lying down. Bring your attention to your body, starting at your feet and working your way up. Take notice of any sensations, thoughts, emotions or any other feelings you may have. Relax any tension in your body.
- **Belly Breathing (or Diaphragmatic Breathing):** Start in your preferred comfortable position, sitting or lying on your back. Place one hand on your stomach, and the other hand on your chest. Inhale a slow, deep breath through your nose. Exaggerate your exhale through your mouth. Feel how your hands rise and fall with your breathing. This exercise differs from your mindful breathing. The goal with belly breathing is to slow your breathing.

Additional mindfulness activities can include journaling, mindful walking to music or podcast, setting daily goals and colouring.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

5 Fall activities for older adults that boost well-being

Fall has officially arrived! Embrace the change in weather and all the beauty and fun it brings with these activities that can boost your well-being.

1. Go for a walk and enjoy the scenery

Walking has long been considered an ideal form of physical exercise. Some potential benefits include improvements to heart health and physical function, as well as pain reduction. What's more, walking is accessible, requires no special skills or equipment, poses little risk of injury, and can be done virtually anywhere.

2. Try a new activity, like Yoga

While most gyms have re-opened, many fitness classes are still being offered virtually, which makes it easier and more accessible to try something new, like yoga.

Yoga has many benefits, including the potential to improve health-related quality of life—which takes into consideration physical, mental, emotional, and social functioning and how these areas impact a person's overall health. For older adults with type 2 diabetes, it can also help manage blood sugar and blood pressure. Yoga is an activity you can enjoy from the comfort of your own home, or outdoors, as it requires minimal equipment and can be adapted, allowing you to work at your own pace and comfort level.

3. Explore your artistic side

Are you someone who enjoys expressing themselves artistically? The changing scenery provides a perfect opportunity to pull out your paint brushes and create something inspired by the colours of autumn. If painting isn't your thing, artistic activities like dancing, singing, or creative writing can also have a positive effect on your health and well-being, and help with things like memory, problem-solving and reaction time.

4. Get creative in the kitchen

Thanksgiving is coming, and pumpkins are soon-to-be in season! Get creative in the kitchen by trying a new recipe or revisiting an old family recipe. While eating delicious food nourishes the body, the process of preparing (and sharing) meals can improve self-esteem and promote a more positive experience of aging.

5. Curl up with a good book

Finally, consider indulging in a good book, or joining a book club, virtually. Reading can relieve symptoms related to depression and dementia and is a relaxing activity that can help reduce feelings of isolation.

Create fond memories this fall and unlock potential benefits for your health and well-being by trying out some of these activities. To learn more, read through our resources below.

[5 Fall activities for older adults that boost well-being \(mcmasteroptimalaging.org\)](https://mcmasteroptimalaging.org)

Happy Thanksgiving from the VON SMART Team



Resources

McMaster Optimal Aging Portal

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

Social Isolation: Are you at risk?

[Social Isolation | McMaster Optimal Aging Portal](#)

In 2017, Statistics Canada reported that **1 in 5** older adults are lonely, felt they lack company, felt abandoned or isolated.

By taking this short, interactive lesson, you will learn the answers to the following questions:

- What are the risk factors for social isolation?
- Are there specific groups of people who are at greater risk?
- What role does a person's mobility play?
- What physical and social activities should you be doing?
- How can technology be used to expand your social network?
- How do age-related conditions such as hearing loss, loss of speech, fear of falling, and incontinence impact a person's ability to participate in social activities?

older adults are:

1 in 5

- lonely
- lack company
- felt abandoned OR
- isolated

VON Updates and Support

We want to give a big Thank You to Voices Of The Nations who generously donated 20 tablets to VON Meals On Wheels clients. This donation will support isolated seniors to virtually connect with friends, family and their community. The tablets also serve as a tool to keep clients active as the VON SMART program has downloaded pre-recorded exercise videos and narrated fall prevention presentations.

"Voices of the Nations is proud to partner with VON and their Meals on Wheels Program to distribute these tablets to help seniors reconnect with their loved ones." say Voices Of The Nations CEO Peter Ruparelia.

"Keeping our clients engaged in their community is such a vital part of VON's vision of every life is lived to the fullest. This donation will support our clients to stay connected to family, friends and VON. Thank you to Voices of the Nations for helping to keep VON clients virtually connected to the Windsor-Essex community!"- Christine Brush, Meals on Wheels Coordinator

[#ThankYouThursday](#) [Voices Of The Nations](#)



VON SMART Exercise & Fall Prevention

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