

# MOVE TO BE STRONG!



## VON SMART NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2024

With the holiday season fast approaching it brings with it a sense of excitement and joy. Throughout the hustle and bustle of preparing for this special time of year with loved ones, and catching up with friends, we can sometimes find ourselves distracted and rushing from one place to the next, overlooking important fall prevention strategies.

As we know, falls can have long-lasting impacts on our health, mobility, and daily lives. We encourage you to take time to enjoy the little things, and try a new approach to your holiday routine. You may find that you need a little more help with your holiday decorating this year, we suggest making it an opportunity to connect with someone and start a new tradition, invite them over to help, and make it a special time together. If you have challenges with your balance, coordination or experience dizziness, consider asking someone for help with the decorations that require you to use a step stool or ladder (e.g. placing ornaments on a tree).

Often during this time of year, we may be traveling to visit friends and family, if you are away from home and in a new environment it is important to remember to be extra vigilant, scan your environment for possible hazards, and adjust for your safety. Throughout the holiday season, there may be many people coming and going, children running around, pets underfoot, and a change of daily routines which may feel overwhelming at times. Give yourself grace, plan ahead with your family and friends, and be patient with yourself. Be purposeful in your movements and most importantly, enjoy this wonderful time of year!

### 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:

Khrista Boon, Supervisor  
([khrista.boon@von.ca](mailto:khrista.boon@von.ca))

-or-

Melissa Baldock, Registered Kinesiologist  
([melissa.baldock@von.ca](mailto:melissa.baldock@von.ca))

-or-

Meghan Simon, Registered Kinesiologist  
([meghan.simon@von.ca](mailto:meghan.simon@von.ca))



# PREVENTING SLIPS AND FALLS THIS WINTER

Jan 15, 2024 - McMaster University



As the winter season sets in, the beauty of the snow-covered landscape can bring with it a set of challenges, including an increased risk of slips and falls. As snow and ice accumulate, walkways, steps, driveways, and sidewalks become slippery, making getting around challenging, especially for older adults. Falls are responsible for many injury-related hospitalizations amongst older adults each year, many of which result in serious injuries.

To stay steady on your feet this winter and all year round, we have compiled a few things you can do to help minimize your risk.

## **Maintain exterior walkways**

If you live in a single-dwelling home, keeping exterior walkways clear of snow and ice is important. Regularly shoveling snow and applying ice melt can prevent accumulation on slippery surfaces. If shoveling your walkway or driveway is daunting, consider asking a friend, family member or neighbour to help clear snow and salt surfaces or hire a paid service for support. When navigating public spaces, take extra caution, as walkways may be slippery.

## **Choose proper footwear**

Choosing the proper footwear is your first line of defence against slips and falls. Opt for shoes or boots with non-slip soles and good traction. Make sure they are warm, waterproof, and fit properly to provide the stability you need when walking on icy or snowy surfaces.

## **Be proactive about your foot health**

From wounds to infections to deformities and more, the list of problems our feet can 'run' into stretches far beyond that pesky coffee table that our toes always seem to find. Maintaining the health of our feet through routine visits to a podiatrist is another method we can lean on to prevent falls.

## **Strengthen your feet to stay on them**

Exercises that strengthen the intrinsic foot muscles or small foot muscles that help with stability and movement may improve toe strength, balance, and mobility and reduce the risk of falls.

## **Stay informed about weather conditions**

Keep an eye on weather forecasts, especially during winter storms. Plan your outings during daylight hours and avoid going out in extreme weather conditions whenever possible.

## **Take your time**

During winter, it's essential to slow down and take smaller steps, especially when walking on uneven or icy terrain. Rushing increases the likelihood of losing your balance. Plan ahead and give yourself extra time to reach your destination safely.

**Source:** <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/hitting-the-headlines/2024/01/15/preventing-slips-and-falls-this-winter?sid=59376cbd-69b0-4d4d-bbb8-6f5aaca9e29f&hl=Winter>

## DID YOU KNOW?

Healthy feet help with stability and balance!

Thinking back to the article on page two, give these exercises a try to help build strength and mobility in your feet.

### TOE CURL

Place a towel flat under your feet. While you are sitting, curl your toes to bunch the towel and then release.

Repeat this exercise 10 times and do 3 repetitions for each foot. Be sure to remove the towel before standing.



### TOE LIFT

While seated, start by lifting your big toe upward but keep your other four toes and heel on the ground. Next, keep your big toe and heel on the ground and lift your four other toes. Repeat each exercise 10 times and do 3 repetitions for each foot.



### FOOT DOMING EXERCISE

While seated press the tips of the toes down into the floor, creating a dome with your forefoot. Ensure that the toes stay long and straight. Repeat 15 times and do 3 repetitions for each foot.



### SOURCE

<https://physioed.com/the-5-best-foot-exercises-for-seniors/>  
<https://www.onestep.co/resources-blog/reduce-foot-pain-arch-support-doming-exercises#:~:text=Seated%20Foot%20Doming&text=Imagine%20you%20are%20shortening%20the,until%20you%20experience%20muscle%20fatigue>

## MEET OUR OTA/PTA CO-OP STUDENT AUTUMN PEREIRA



Hello! My name is Autumn Pereira and I am so excited to be a placement student with the Sarnia-Lambton SMART team! I was born and raised in Corunna, Ontario and I am in my second year of the Occupational and Physiotherapy Assistant program at Lambton College. Within the past year and a half of my program, I have come to learn the importance of keeping our bodies and minds active – especially as we age – and have grown my passion for working in the community with older adults to support healthy aging.

Being placed with the VON SMART Program was a dream come true! Over my short time here I have seen great care and dedication from each SMART team member as they work with the older adults in our community. This experience has inspired me to learn more about healthy, active aging and fall prevention and has solidified my interest in working with the older adults in our community. This placement has given me an invaluable experience and I am excited to see where my future goes after graduation!

Outside of my studies and placement, I enjoy being with my friends, family, and dogs, reading, going on walks and I just recently got into hiking! I love exploring new provincial parks and plan on doing some winter hikes this year. I am very excited to bring my passion for working with older adults and my knowledge in occupational and physiotherapy to the Sarnia-Lambton SMART team!



The start of a New Year is close at hand but I'm compelled to sit with 2024 for a bit longer to reflect on our VON SMART Program's journey over this past year. The flightpath metaphor is aptly applied to 2024, a year that saw many different routes, course corrections and destinations or to put it differently achievements, challenges and milestones.

**There is truly so much to be thankful for.**

Below and to the right I offer a snapshot of the VON SMART Program's year in review and I encourage you to take some time as well to reflect upon your own flightpath over this past year. How did the year start? Did you fly into the unknown and discover new possibilities, knowledge and places? Did you experience turbulence along the way? How did you approach change and challenges this year? How was the landing as the year winds down? Are you ready for take-off as we head into 2025?

### **VON SMART'S FLIGHTPATH 2024**

Number of exercise classes delivered monthly across Erie St. Clair → **786**

Number of participants attending exercise classes monthly → **6642**

Fall Prevention workshops delivered → **55**

Monthly Newsletter offered in English and French is distributed to over **200 subscribers!**

### **Mobility Matters Checkups:**

Tested 150 individuals across Erie St. Clair

- 75 Retirement Home residents
- 75 Community class participants

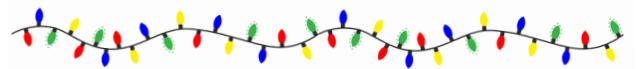
Note: Follow up testing has begun and we are already seeing maintenance and improvement in outcomes from the first round of testing.

### **New Partnerships (not exhaustive):**

- Active Lifestyle Centre's Health Hub (also reinstated SMART exercise with the Parkinson's Support Group)
- We Serve Seniors
- Tilbury Family Health Team
- Chatham Kent Ontario Health Team
- Alzheimer's Society and ADP programs
- Red Cross
- Club d'Age d'Or
- Paulin Memorial Church
- General Mihailovich Place Apartments
- Harrow Family Health Team
- Harrow United Church
- Dalhousie Place Apartments

### **IMPORTANT MILESTONES**

- SMART Participant Dorothy C., celebrated 105<sup>th</sup> birthday!
- October 17<sup>th</sup> designated as Exercise and Fall Prevention Day
- 2024 VON SMART Program celebrates 30 years!!!



**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY  
NEW YEAR TO ALL OF OUR  
FITNESS FRIENDS!**



**FROM THE VON SMART TEAM**



**REMINDER  
NO CLASSES**

**Tuesday, December 31, 2024  
Wednesday, January 1, 2025**

(Note: some locations have a longer holiday break. Contact your local program.)