

HAPPY NEW YEAR

WALK LIKE A PENGUIN TO AVOID A WINTER FALL...

What could be better than being outside on a crisp, snowy day? Walking around on snowy, icy sidewalks without falling would be **much** better. Winter can be a lovely time of year, but snow and ice can make getting around challenging. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related hospital visits, and wintry conditions raise the potential of taking a life-changing tumble.

To stay on your feet, imitate how a penguin walks in snowy conditions. Take smaller, slower steps and keep your weight forward over your front leg. That is the 'penguin walk'. It looks like a waddle and may not be graceful, but it will help reduce your risk of falling.

A few more tips from the STEADY U Ohio Initiative can help reduce the risk of falls on icy surfaces:

- Take your time. It's better to be late than to fall rushing to get there.
- Look at the route ahead of you and pay attention. Being distracted can cause you to miss an obstacle or icy patch.
- When conditions are icy, walk with a buddy or carry a cell phone.
- Don't try to walk in more than an inch of snow.
- Bundle up, but make sure you can see in all directions and move freely.
- Wear winter boots that fit well and provide more traction than tennis or dress shoes.
- Carry a small bag of sand or rock salt in your coat pocket to add traction in an icy sidewalk or path.
- Check that the rubber tips on canes and walkers are in good repair.
- If you do not feel safe, ask for help.

www.steadyu.ohio.gov

COMBATING SENIOR ISOLATION DURING WINTER

Being indoors because of cold conditions and weather can put our parents at risk of senior isolation during winter. Find out what to do to keep your elderly loved ones engaged and healthy.

How Loneliness Affects Seniors Health and Well-Being

We often think of the elderly as residing with family, in a senior community or other shared housing situations, but according to the U.S. Census Bureau, the probability of living alone increases with age. For women, the likelihood of living alone is 32% for 65-74 year olds, but this increases to 57% for those aged 85 years or more; for men, the corresponding proportions are 13% and 29%. Even for centenarians – seniors who are 100 years of age or older – the numbers are astonishingly high; about a third of centenarians live alone at home.

So what can caregivers and families do to address the issue if we fear our loved ones are isolated? Here is a list of suggestions for preventing senior loneliness and keeping our loved ones happy and healthy this winter:

1. Address any underlying health issues

Whether it is arranging for the delivery of incontinence supplies or making sure your loved one has regular hearing or vision tests, being proactive about seniors' health can help them feel better on a day-to-day basis. What's more, it can diminish the social anxiety related to hearing, vision, or continence concerns.

2. Reach out to family, friends and neighbors

If the weather makes it impossible for you to check on your senior loved one as much as you would like, enlist the help of others who may be nearby and more easily able to visit. Can a neighbor knock on the door and check in? Do not forget to call or email your loved one often to keep those connections strong, even when you cannot visit in person.

3. Prevent Senior Malnutrition with food delivery

Seniors who live alone may be at greater risk of poor nutrition when the weather turns nasty. Consider getting food delivered by an online grocery service, or by an organization such as Meals on Wheels, which can provide not just nutritious food but social contact.

4. Encourage mobility and safe transportation

Encouraging your loved ones to use the adaptive technologies they may need, from hearing aids to walker, which can help them become more active and socially engaged. When it comes to getting outside the house, though, storms and snow can present a challenge. Give senior relatives rides when you can, or arrange safe transportation for them, whether it is senior-friendly public transit, an ambulette or a taxi.

5. Connect older loved ones with necessary local services

If you do not know what is available to the local seniors, you can call the Auglaize County Council on Aging at 419-394-8252, and we will try to answer your questions.

www.aplaceformon.com