

# WINTER WEATHER: WATCH YOUR STEP

No matter how well snow and ice are removed from streets and sidewalks, we should still assume that most outdoor surfaces are slippery during winter months. It is important to be aware of the dangers and to know how to safely walk on ice and slick pavement.

## BEWARE OF BLACK ICE

Black ice is a thin coating of ice that forms on the ground when the temperature dips below freezing. It is deceiving in nature, as the ground beneath the ice appears to only be wet, when it is actually icy and dangerous. Follow these safety precautions for identifying and dealing with black ice:

1. Before stepping on a surface, test the area with your foot to see if it is slick.
2. Take small steps, rather than large strides, and shuffle your feet.
3. Walk at a slow pace; moving too fast increases your likelihood to misjudge a step or encounter a hazard before you have a chance to notice it.
4. Bend slightly at the knees and walk flat-footed with your center of gravity directly over your feet.
5. If you fall, try to control your movement with sequential contacts at your thigh, hip and shoulder to avoid using your arms to catch yourself, which can result in broken wrists or arms.
6. If your feet slip out from under you, try to bend your back and head forward to prevent from hitting your head on the pavement.
7. Avoid distractions like cell phones or digging for car keys and focus on each step you take.

## IMPROVE FOOT TRACTION WITH CLEATS OR SOCKS

Depending on where you live, you may want to invest in ice cleats for everyday activities, such as collecting the mail, walking the dog or trudging to and from your house and car if you don't park in an attached garage.

If ice isn't that troublesome where you live but you would like a cheaper solution to improving your traction on foot during winter months, look no further than your own sock drawer. According to an article published in the Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association, "Researchers found that wearing socks over normal footwear was associated with statistically significant improvement in traction," and, "Wearing socks over shoes appears to be an effective and inexpensive method to reduce the likelihood of slipping on ice footpaths."

## PREVENT INDOOR FALLS

Remove snow and water from footwear to avoid creating wet and slippery conditions indoors.

