

(Staying) Standing Up to Winter

It's a beautiful snow falling this morning. I urge you to take in that beauty like the spoonful of sugar to help the medicine go down, because you know well enough that our winter means for all of us less time spent outside, less activity overall, more exposure to treacherous footing and all in all more risk of falling. I hope I haven't spoiled your enjoyment of the winter scenery.

And I don't have much to add that isn't likely all well known to all by now (unless you've just moved from Florida.) I will share a few important reminders:

- Proper footwear for the conditions is essential in reducing fall risk. That means adequate traction when outdoors, but also proper fit and support with all shoes,
- Give yourself extra time when planning an outing to allow for slower, more cautious movements,
- Be careful of water from your wet boots. A fall is all the more tragic in your front hall after returning home having survived the elements,
- And most importantly, the key to reducing fall risk is to *keep your legs strong, your ankles flexible and your balance tuned up*. This becomes more challenging as winter progresses and the impact of our lowered activity begins to accumulate. So make sure you have a program that is doable. If your fair weather activities and classes are now off the schedule, find something at home that you can and will do. There are plenty of programs available on-line, from your cable provider or on dvd.

Make fall prevention top of your winter survival list. If balance is already an issue, speak to your primary care provider about a referral to physical therapist. They will work you up a home exercise program custom fit for you. Looking ahead to the New Year, I am working with a regional VNA to have a therapist on site regularly for screenings and referrals. But don't wait. Winter is here!

[Kendal at Home has several good recent postings about fall prevention on their blog:
<https://www.kendalathome.org/blog>]