

# Walking Hazards: Dealing with Snow & Ice

It is that time of year when we need to prepare for walking on icy and snow packed streets, parking lots and sidewalks. Falls are one of the leading causes of hospital admission for all ages and we need to be mentally prepared. One in four falls results in an injury including sprains, fractures and trauma to the head. With the threat of ice and snow covered surfaces it is important to take the time to learn to recognize hazards and how to prevent them. The following are hints that can make winter walking less hazardous.

## **Strategies for walking on ice and snow:**

- Be aware of your surroundings - always watch for hazards and dangers such as snow and ice on steps, sidewalks, and pathways. Use handrails when available
- Take shorter steps or shuffle, walk with your feet pointed outward slightly for a stable base of support
- Keep your center of gravity over your feet; avoid reaching or twisting when walking. Keep one hand free for your balance
- Wear footwear designed for winter, with rubber soles and treads. High heels and leather soles are dangerous on slick surfaces
- Don't rush. Give yourself lots of time to get where you are going
- Avoid carrying things in your arms. Use a backpack to keep your hands free for balance, grabbing railings, etc.
- If you do fall, relax and fall as limply as possible. Keep your arms in and try to let your main torso absorb the brunt of the fall

## **Strategies for getting in and out of your vehicle:**

- Always test the surface before you put your entire weight down. The first step out of the vehicle can be the most dangerous
- Keep your legs close to the vehicle and hold on to the handle or door
- Get into your vehicle slowly and consciously. Get as close as you can before you climb in

Here's to a safe and healthy 2013!!!