

# Guide to Living Independently for Older Adults



**Stay Active. Stay Independent. Stay on Your Feet!**

Developed by Chatham-Kent Public Health and adapted with permission

Your risk of injury at home is affected by your home environment, your lifestyle & your habits.

It is our hope that by following the suggestions in this booklet and doing the exercises regularly, you will improve your muscle strength, balance and endurance and reduce your risk of falling.

**Not all exercise programs are suitable for everyone.** Although you may be able to do these exercises easily, it is recommended you speak with your health care provider about the kind of exercises and activities you can safely do.

The exercises in the booklet consist of **7 activities** from the Strategies and Actions for Independent Living program from the province of British Columbia.

**You are never too old or young to start!**

# Getting Active

Being active and doing exercises can improve your strength and balance. It can reduce your risk of falling and can help prevent injury should you experience a fall. Find an activity that you enjoy, and do it.

Exercises at the Kitchen Sink will:

- Improve your balance
- Increase your strength, endurance and flexibility
- Help you sleep better
- Improve your mood

These exercises can be done in your home and are FREE!

People who do these exercises routinely report being stronger and looking and feeling better. Regular physical activity can help prevent diseases and will keep you living a longer, healthier, independent life!



# The Buddy System

It is sometimes hard to do regular physical activity on your own. Invite a friend to join you. Have fun and socialize at the same time.

Remember, every little bit helps.

- ✓ Plan some time each day to exercise
- ✓ Exercise with someone else
- ✓ Exercise at the same time each day - after breakfast or lunch
- ✓ Write down the number of exercises you do each day (see table at the back of booklet)

**Before you start your exercises be sure to check the following:**

- Do you feel OK?
- Have you eaten?
- Check your footwear. Are you wearing shoes with a non-slip bottom?
- Check your surroundings. Is there any clutter, or things you could trip over around you?



# Do exercises you feel comfortable doing

Start slowly and if necessary, do just one of the exercises each day. Increase the exercises as you are able. Try a few every morning, afternoon and evening rather than trying to do them all at once.

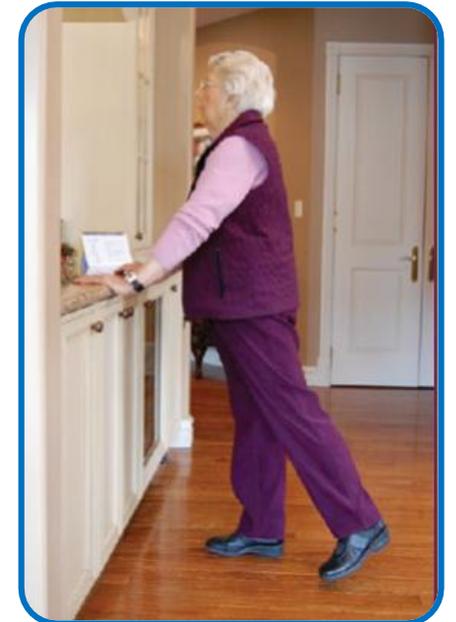
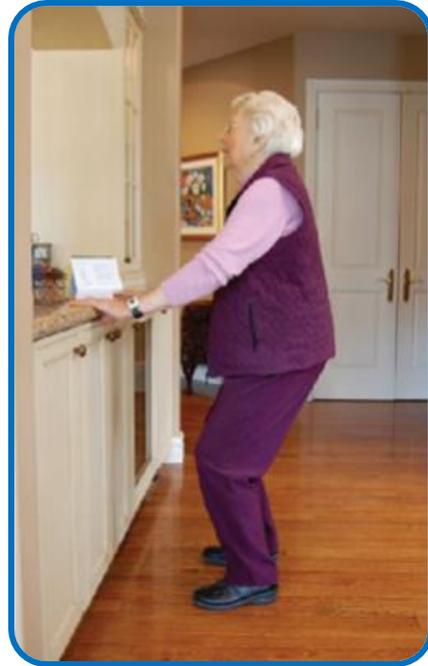
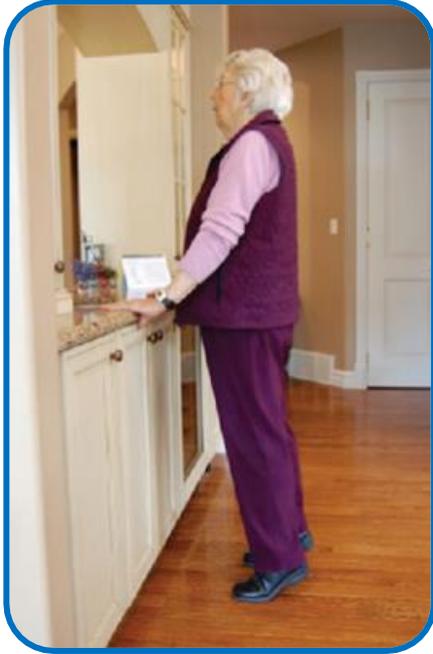
If any activity causes you increased pain or shortness of breath, do fewer or stop that activity and talk with your doctor.

The exercises in this booklet are done while supporting yourself by holding onto a stable surface, such as a kitchen sink. Over time, as you get stronger, gradually decrease the amount of support you use through your hands, working towards not needing to hold on at all.

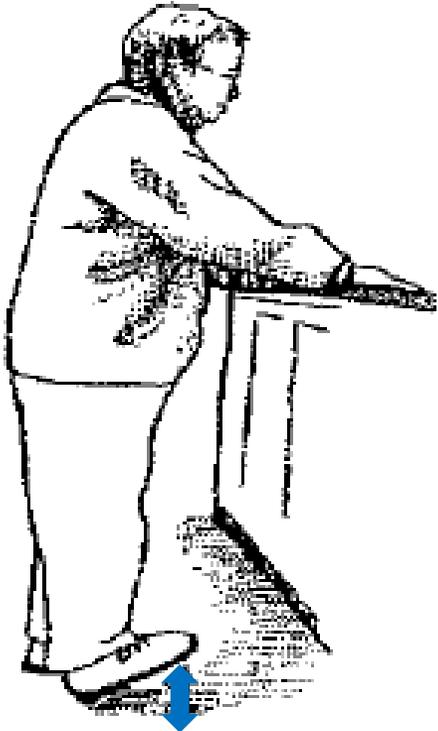
Keep track of how many of each exercise you do. This will help you see your progress.

**Now lets begin!**

# Guide to Exercises at the Kitchen Sink



# Exercise #1: Slow Toe Taps

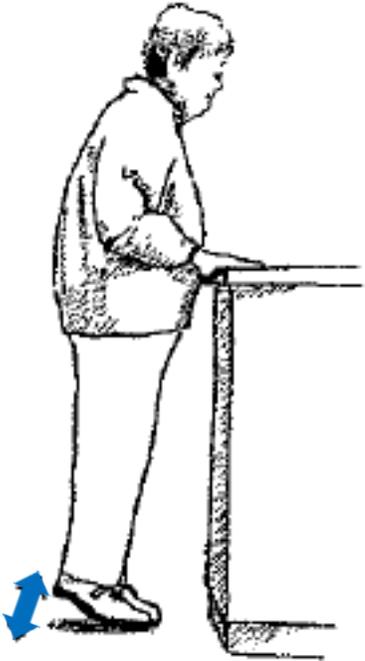


1. Stand facing the kitchen sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Starting with the right foot keep the heel on the floor and lift your toes up.
3. Count 1, 2, 3 while you lift your toes and then lower them and relax.
4. Repeat with the left foot. Lift, 1, 2, 3 lower, relax.
5. Continue to do this 3 to 5 times with each foot. Do them slowly.
6. Gradually add one or more repetitions every few days until you can do this 15 times with each foot.

## Activity Checklist:

- ✓ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ✓ Are you ready to continue?

# Exercise #2: Up on Toes

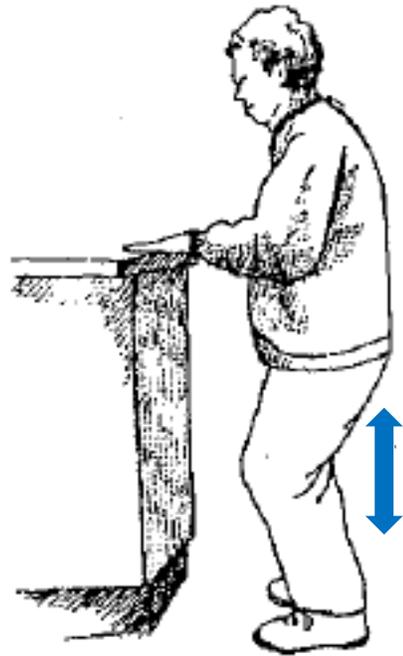


1. Stand facing the kitchen sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Raise up onto the toes of both feet. Come down slowly.
3. Again, up on toes, down slowly.
4. Continue doing this 3 to 5 more times if you can.
5. Gradually add one more repetition every few days or once a week until you can do this 15 times.

## Activity Checklist:

- ✓ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ✓ Should you stop, or are you ok to continue?
- ✓ As you are able, try to decrease the amount of support through your hands as your strength and balance improve.

# Exercise #3: Mini Squats



1. Stand facing the sink with your feet comfortably apart.
2. Hold on with both hands.
3. Bend your knees slightly keeping your back straight. Keep your heels on the floor.
4. Hold for a few seconds if you are able. Now straighten your knees.
5. Bend your knees slightly again, hold...then straighten. Do this 3 to 5 times.
6. Add one more squat every few days as you are able until you can do 15.

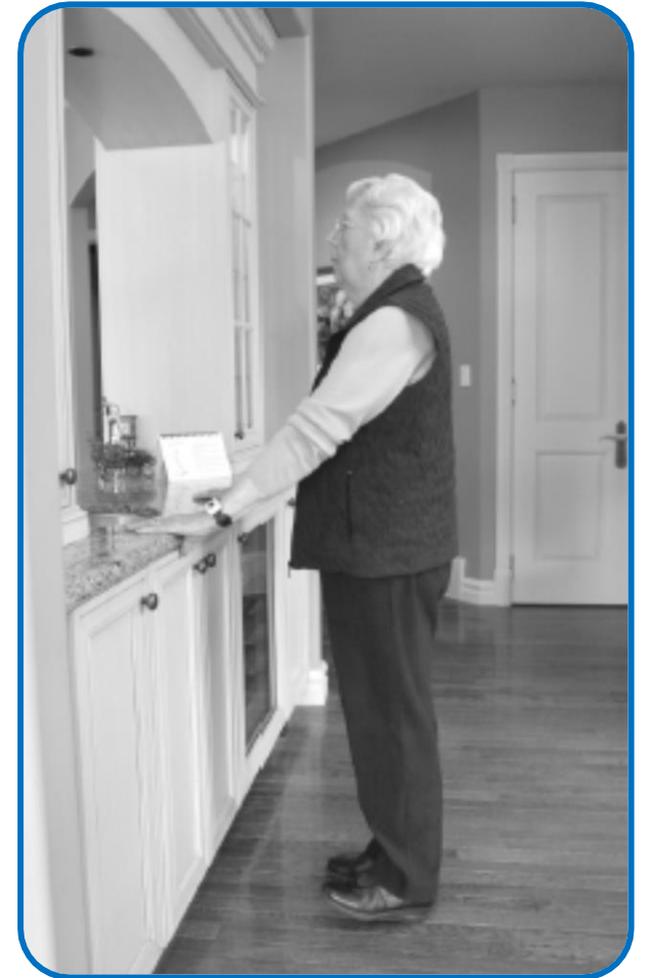
Remember! Don't bend too far – do a small squat only.

# Exercise #3: Mini Squats

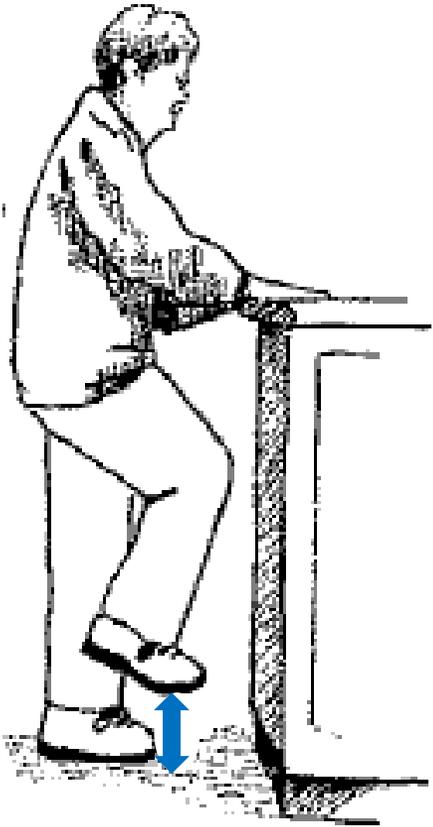
## Activity Checklist:

- ✓ Were you comfortable doing this exercise?  
If so, please continue.
- ✓ Check your posture:
  - Stand tall and strong
  - Toes pointing forward, not turned in or out
  - Are your shoulders back and is your chin tucked in

It is okay to give yourself permission to stop if you have had enough for today.



# Exercise #4: Walking on the Spot



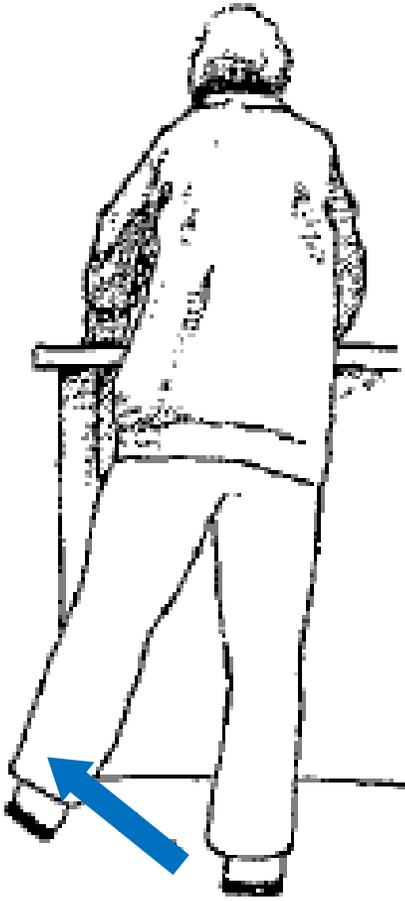
1. Stand facing the kitchen sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Walk or march slowly on the spot. Count to 30.
3. Bring your knees up and slowly lower your foot back to the floor. Great work!
4. Every third or fourth day gradually increase the time spent walking by one minute.

When you are strong enough, you may want to begin walking around your home for a few minutes without stopping. When you do this, use the mobility aide that you normally use for walking.

## Activity Checklist:

- ✓ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ✓ Are you standing tall and strong?
- ✓ Are you ready to continue?

# Exercise #5: Alternate Leg Out and In



1. Stand facing the sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Keeping your toes pointing forward, lift your left leg out to the side.
3. Hold this position for a few seconds if you can, then slowly lower leg back to the centre.
4. Now lift your right leg out to the side. Hold and lower back to the centre.
5. Keep alternating legs, left...then right...Repeat 3 to 5 times.
6. Keep strong and tall. Do not let your upper body sway.
7. Do one more set - including both left and right legs each week until eventually you can do 15 sets.

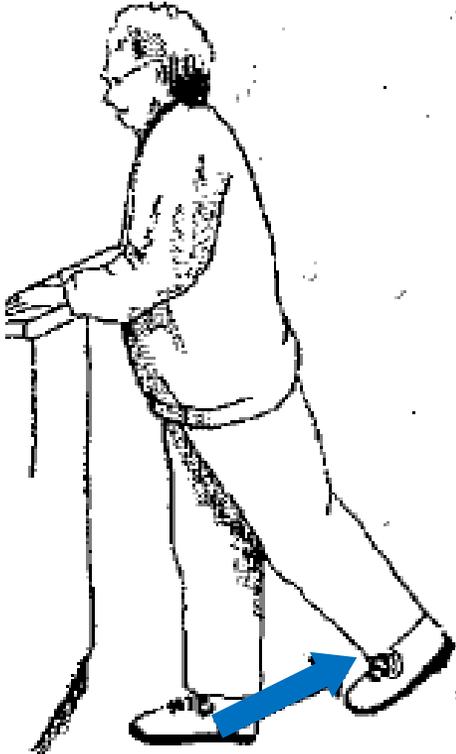
# Exercise #5: Alternate Leg Out and In

## Activity Checklist:

- ✓ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ✓ Remember, as your strength and balance improves try to decrease the amount of support through your hands.
  - Try holding on with one hand, and a few fingers of the other hand.
  - When you get comfortable with that, hold on with a few fingers of each hand.
  - Now try to rest one finger of each hand on the counter.
  - Then try one finger of one hand.
  - When you are strong enough, try no hands.
- ✓ You may not be able to do this in the beginning, but as you get stronger you will rely less on the support of your hands.

**Are you ready to continue?**

# Exercise #6: Alternate Leg Behind

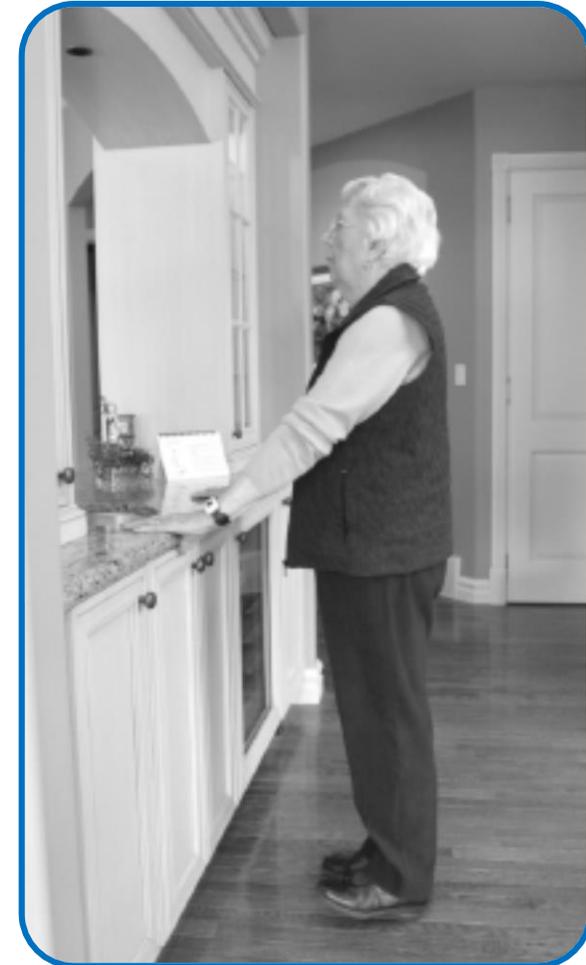


1. Stand tall and strong facing the sink. Hold on with both hands.
2. Extend your left leg behind you without bending your knee.
3. Return your leg to the starting position.
4. Next extend your right leg behind you, then return.
5. Check that you are keeping your back straight and not leaning too far forward.
6. Continue alternating each leg, repeating 3 to 5 times.
7. Increase the amount you do every few days until you can do 15 sets.

# Exercise #6: Alternate Leg Behind

## Activity Checklist:

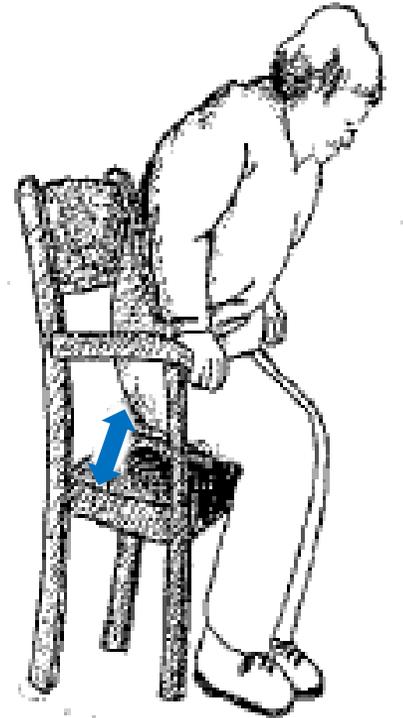
- ✓ How are you feeling after this exercise?
- ✓ Are you ready to continue?
- ✓ Before you continue, take a minute and check your posture:
  - Stand tall and strong
  - Feet on the floor with toes pointing forward
  - Keep your head up looking forward
- ✓ Rest if you need to.



# Exercise #7: Sit to Stand

**It is important NOT to rush through this exercise.**

1. Sit in a firm chair with the back of the chair against the wall if possible. If you have a walker, place it in front of you - lock the brakes.
2. Bring your bottom a little closer to the front of the chair if needed.
3. Place your feet flat on the floor, close to the chair. Put your hands on the armrests.
4. Lean forward and stand up.
5. Stand tall for a few seconds, holding onto your walker if you need it for support.
6. Step back until you feel the chair against the back of your legs, reach back to hold the armrests, and slowly lower yourself to sit down in the chair.
7. When you are ready again, stand tall for a few seconds, then sit down. Do this 3 to 5 more times.
8. Do one more sit to stand every few days as you are able until you can do 15.



# Exercise #7: Sit to Stand

## Activity Checklist

How are you feeling after completing all of the exercises you have selected to do at this time?

Remember:

- Mark your calendar as an exercise day
- As you feel stronger, try to use less support through your hands



**Give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done!**

**You are taking charge of your health.**

Continue reading through this booklet to learn other things that can help keep you safe and independent!

# Home Safety

Did you know that 50% of falls happen in the home?

You may be able to prevent a fall by making a few simple changes in and around your home.

Take a look around.... Do you need to make changes?

The **Home Safety Checklist** is a tool that can help you identify what simple changes could make your home safer. A free copy can be provided to you by your care provider or local public health unit.

## A Home Safety Checklist

*Stay Active, Stay Independent  
& Stay On Your Feet!*

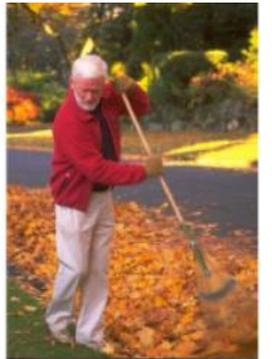
Did you know?

- ✓ Falls are not a normal part of aging. They are predictable and can be prevented.
- ✓ Your home, furnishings and lifestyle all affect your risk of falling in and around the home.
- ✓ Removing hazards in and around the home can reduce the risk of falling and loss of independence.

Use this checklist to make your home a safer place to live.



Ontario 



# Medication Management



See your doctor at least once a year for a check up. Let your doctor know if you have had a fall.

Ask these 5 questions about your medications.

Keep your medication record up to date.

Store your medications safely.

Review all medications at least once a year with your pharmacist or health care provider (include herbal, vitamins and over the counter medicines).

## 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS

when you see your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

### 1. CHANGES?

Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?

### 2. CONTINUE?

What medications do I need to keep taking, and why?

### 3. PROPER USE?

How do I take my medications, and for how long?

### 4. MONITOR?

How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects do I watch for?

### 5. FOLLOW-UP?

Do I need any tests and when do I book my next visit?



Keep your medication record up to date.

#### Remember to include:

- ✓ drug allergies
- ✓ vitamins and minerals
- ✓ herbal/natural products
- ✓ all medications including non-prescription products

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to review all your medications to see if any can be stopped or reduced.



Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists

Société canadienne des pharmaciens d'hôpitaux

CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION / ASSOCIATION DES PHARMACIENS DU CANADA

SafeMedicationUse.ca



# Manage Your Health

- Keep an up to date list of all medications with you
- Use only one pharmacy so your pharmacist knows all your medications
- Do not take old medications and never take another person's medications
- Return medication that is no longer required to any pharmacy for safe disposal
- Be aware, alcohol can change the way medications work in your body; even without the effect of medication, alcohol can increase your risk of having a fall



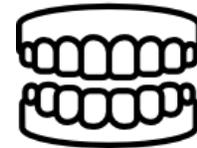
Don't forget to check your:



Vision



Hearing



Teeth/Dentures

# Healthy Eating Recommendations\*

## Canada's Food Guide

Healthy eating is more than the foods you eat. It's also about where, when, why and how you eat.

### Be mindful of your eating habits

- Take time to eat
- Notice when you are hungry and when you are full

### Cook more often

- Plan what you eat
- Involve others in planning and preparing meals

### Eat meals with others



# Make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day

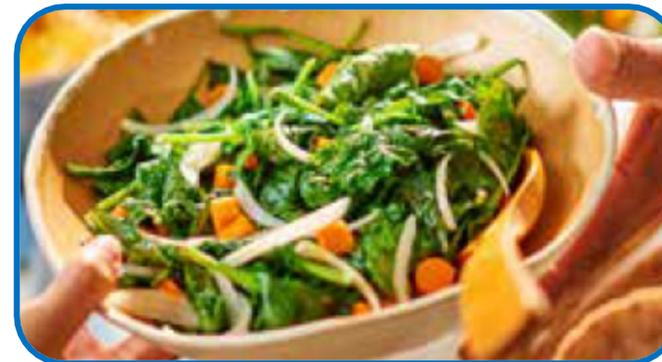


**Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit, whole grains and protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.**

- Choose foods with healthy fats instead of saturated fat

**Limit highly processed foods. If you choose these foods eat them less often and in small amounts.**

- Prepare meals and snacks using ingredients that have little to no sodium, sugars or saturated fat
- Choose healthier options when eating out



# Tips for Healthy Eating

- If you have a small appetite, try eating healthy snacks every 2 to 3 hours
  - Some healthy snacks include fruit and yogurt, a hardboiled egg, vegetables, apple sauce, walnuts, whole grain toast with peanut or almond butter, cheese, whole grain crackers
  - Take smaller bites and chew your food well
  - Add flavour to your food using herbs and spices instead of salt
  - When cooking, make extra food so you have leftovers
  - When you can, eat meals with family or friends
- 
- ✓ If you cough or choke when eating or drinking, you may have a swallowing problem. Talk to your doctor.
  - ✓ If your teeth or gums are sore, or if your dentures do not fit well, it may be harder for you to chew and eat. Talk to your dentist.



# Make water your drink of choice!

At every age, it's important to drink enough fluid because it helps prevent dehydration, joint and muscle pain, and constipation.



As we get older, it becomes harder to recognize when you are thirsty. Try keeping a water bottle with you wherever you go, and take sips throughout the day. Don't wait until you feel thirsty!

It's recommended to have 9-12 cups of fluid each day (1 cup = 250 ml)



Water is best, but other drinks and foods can help you meet your fluid need. These include: milk or milk alternatives such as soy, rice or almond beverage, 100% fruit or vegetable juice, soups, coffee and tea.

# Calcium

Calcium is important for strong bones, but it can be hard to get the right amount from what we eat. So, in addition to having milk, cheese or yogurt daily (good sources of calcium), you may need to take a calcium supplement.

# Vitamin D

Vitamin D is also important for our bones as it helps our bodies absorb calcium. We can make vitamin D from sunlight, but this gets harder as we age.

Foods that contain vitamin D include milk, fortified soy beverages, salmon and tuna. It is difficult to get enough vitamin D from food, so it is recommended that all adults over the age of 50 years take a vitamin D supplement.

**Many supplements have both vitamin D and calcium.**

**Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find a supplement that is right for you.**



# Don't forget your fibre!

## We all know that fibre is good for us, but why?

- Keeps you regular and prevents constipation
- Improves blood sugar levels in people with diabetes
- Keeps you feeling full for longer.
- Can lower your cholesterol and risk for colon cancer and heart disease.



## Get more fibre everyday!

- Start your day with high-fibre cereal (oatmeal, bran)
- Have a fruit or vegetable with every meal and as a snack
- Eat the skins on your fruits and vegetables
- Choose whole grain or whole wheat bread, pasta and rice
- Add chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils, and other beans to your soup, pasta and salad
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about taking a fibre supplement such as Metamucil®)\*\* **Make sure to drink plenty of water \*\***

NOTE: If you use laxatives regularly, talk to your doctor.

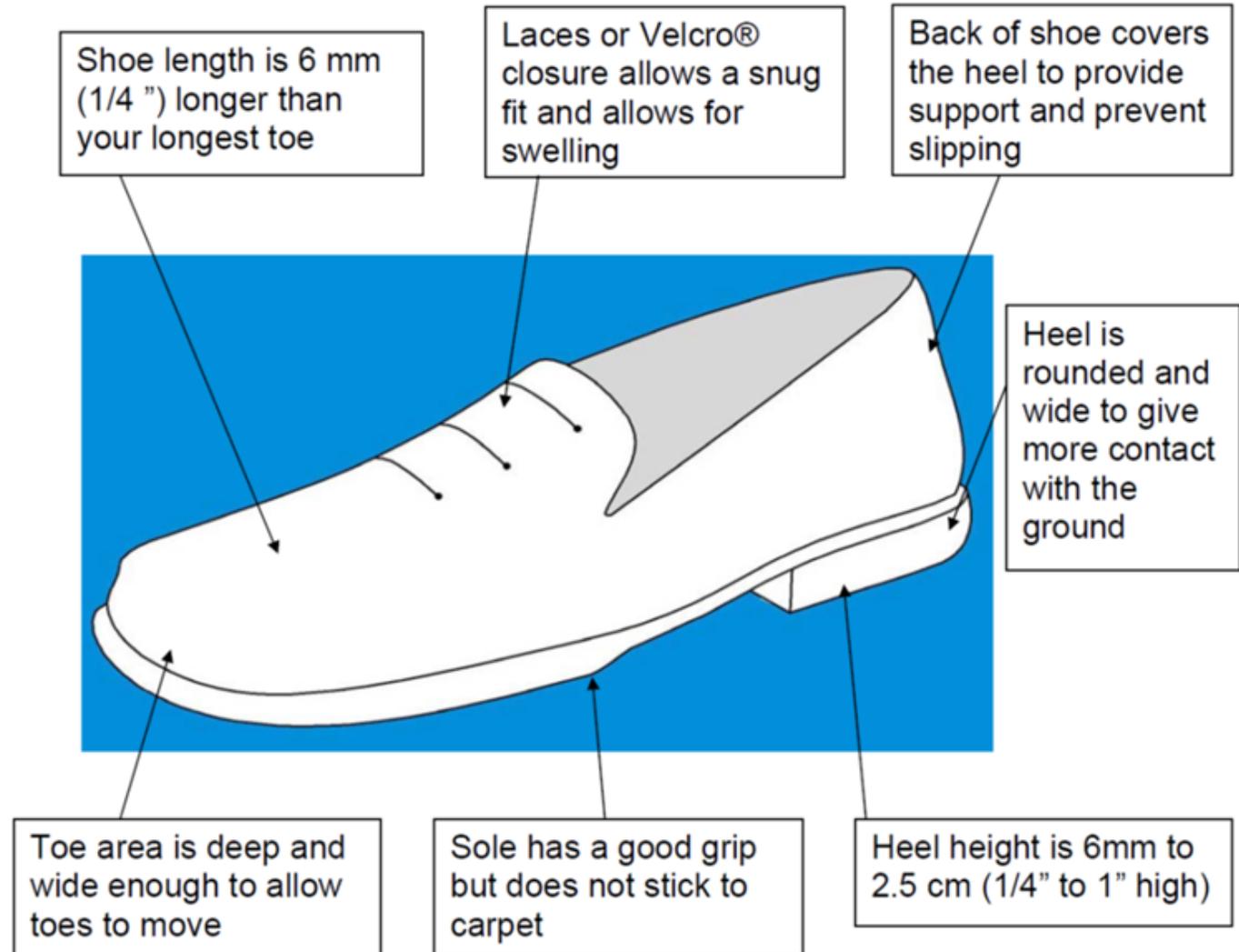
# Clothing & Footwear

## The ideal shoe

Wear clothes that fit loosely, are easy to get on and take off and have simple closures.

Nightgowns, housecoats and pants that are too long can cause you to trip.

It's important to wear a shoe that fits well and is supportive.



# Ease the Strain

There are many safety devices available to ease the strains of daily activities.

There is equipment and mobility aids to suit all needs including:

- Canes
- Grab bars
- Raised toilet seats
- Bath seats

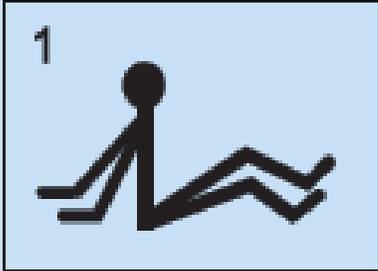


Speak with your doctor or health care agency to see what may be available to help you remain independent and confident.

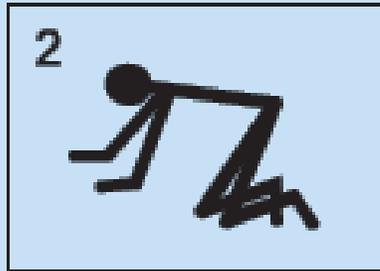
# What to do if you fall!

Try not to panic, rest for a moment....

## If You Can Get Up



- Roll onto your side.
- Push up into sitting position.



- Turn onto your hands and knees.
- Crawl to the nearest stable furniture, e.g. bed, chair, stool, toilet.



- Place your hands on the seat.



- Place one foot flat on the floor.



- Lean forward and push up with your other foot.



- Sit, rest, then tell someone you have fallen.

## If You Are Injured

- **DO NOT** try to get up.
- **Get Help.** Drag yourself to a phone. Call 911 and stay on the line.
- **Keep Warm.** Use anything that is near: bedding, a coat, even a tablecloth.
- **If You Are Wet.** If your bladder «lets go» in the fall, move away from the damp area to keep warm.
- **Move Your Limbs.** Gently moving your arms and legs will help your circulation, and reduce pressure areas.

## BE PREPARED

- ☑ **Practice** getting up **before** a fall occurs
- ☑ Activate your personal alarm call system if you fall
- ☑ Have your hphone at table level for easier access
- ☑ Find a daily telephone buddy

# Fraud Prevention

Seniors can be likely targets for con artists or scammers.

Scams can take place on the phone (telemarketing), internet, through phoney bank representatives or home renovations.



- ✓ Never give out personal information including bank information over the phone or internet.
- ✓ Never give money to person who say they are bankers, police officers or other officials.
- ✓ Never allow people into your home to do repairs unless you call them.
- ✓ Never sign a piece of paper you don't fully understand.



**If it sounds too good to be true...  
it probably IS too good to be true!**

# Congratulations!

By continuing to do the **“Exercises at the Kitchen Sink”** and following the suggestions in this booklet, you have taken the first step towards healthy, safe and independent living!



# Record the number of times each activity is done

Month: _____	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
1. Slow Toe Taps							
2. Up on Toes							
3. Mini Squats							
4. Walking on the Spot							
5. Alternate Leg Out/In							
6. Alternate Leg Behind							
7. Sit to Stand							

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For more information on healthy independent living and resources in your community, contact the SOYF lead at your public health unit:

- ❑ Algoma Public Health • 1-866-892-0172
- ❑ North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit • 1-800-563-2808
- ❑ Porcupine Health Unit • 1-800-461-1818
- ❑ Public Health Sudbury & Districts • 1-855-674-4330
- ❑ Timiskaming Health Unit • 1-866-747-4305

### Acknowledgements

