

Walking is good for you

Walking is a great way to improve your physical fitness, health and general well-being. It can help:

- Lower your blood pressure and cholesterol and strengthen your heart and cardiovascular system.
- Increase your bone density.
- Produce hormones that help your muscles stay strong.
- Decrease stress, make you feel better and sleep more soundly.
- Lose weight or help you maintain a healthy weight level.
- Improve your flexibility. Flexibility is an important key to maintaining your independence and may even extend the number of years you can continue to drive safely.

But seniors are overrepresented in pedestrian fatalities

In 2005 in BC:

- 68 pedestrians were killed.
- 27 of those killed were 61 years of age and older.
- Seniors represent approximately 13% of our population, but they account for about 40% of the pedestrian fatalities.
- 1,857 pedestrians were injured.
- 330 of the injured were 61 years of age and older.

Unfortunately, it seems that each year more senior pedestrians are involved in serious crashes. Often their injuries are more serious than would be the case with younger pedestrians and their recovery time is longer.

What can you do to increase your safety?

Most pedestrian crashes are preventable and the benefits of the exercise gained through walking usually outweigh the risks.* There are things you can do as a pedestrian to increase your safety.

- Make sure that other road users can see you.** Wear white or light-coloured clothing. Pedestrians are especially hard to see in low-light conditions at night, dawn, dusk, on dark, rainy days and in the winter. Consider wearing clothing that has retroreflective material on it. You can also buy retroreflective tape to put on your clothing, cane, walker, etc. Retroreflective materials give off light when headlights shine on them, but remember that they do not work in daylight.
- Make sure that you can see where you are going.** If you are walking in an unlit or poorly lit area, consider carrying a flashlight. It will help you see where you are going and will make it easier for others to see you.
- “Dress” for the occasion.** Wear comfortable walking shoes and if you sometimes walk with a cane or walker, consider taking it with you for balance.

* *If you have a medical condition that may put you at risk, talk to your doctor regarding the benefits of walking before beginning a walking program.*

More ways to increase your safety

- Walk at times that are safer.** Pick daylight hours if you can and wait until ice or snow have been cleared. If you must go out when there's snow or ice, consider getting a pair of ice grips and using a cane with a pick.
- Use paths and sidewalks whenever they are available.** If you must walk on the road, walk facing the oncoming traffic so that you can see what's coming and stay as close to the side of the road as you can.
- Cross at crosswalks whenever possible and remember to activate the crossing signal if one is present.** At the same time, don't rely on traffic signals. You can't assume that drivers will stop. Drivers who aren't paying attention may not see the crosswalk sign or signal and they may not see you, either.
- Allow plenty of time to cross the street.** You may not be as fast as you once were, so make sure you have enough time to cross. Never cross when there is a steady DON'T WALK signal (red hand) and don't be tempted to cross when the FLASHING DON'T WALK signal is activated. Wait until there is a "fresh" WALK signal (a signal that has just turned to WALK). This will give you more time to cross.
- Stop and look for traffic in all directions before crossing.** That means you should look left, then right and then left again – even on a one-way street. In most cases, left is the direction that cars will be coming from when you first step off the curb. Listen for oncoming traffic.
- Establish eye contact with the driver.** That way you will know that the driver sees you.
- Remember that cars and other obstacles can "hide" you.** Even if a driver stops to let you cross, remember that there may be another vehicle overtaking the one that has already stopped for you.
- Be particularly careful at intersections.** Drivers may not see you until you are actually out on the roadway. Remember that you are often at greatest risk just after you step off the curb and so it is critical that you look for traffic before stepping off the curb.
- Watch out for turning vehicles.** Drivers are often focussed on completing their turn and they may not see you. Be cautious of vehicles that are turning left and right. In BC, drivers often turn right on a red light and so it's important to look behind you, too, before stepping off the curb. Always make sure the turning driver sees you.
- Be alert in parking lots.** Drivers who are backing out of a parking stall may have difficulty seeing you. Make sure to watch for backup lights and to listen for starting engines.
- Walk with a friend.** It's more fun and if you are looking out for each other, it can be safer. But remember not to get distracted by your conversation.

Are you a driver? Do your part to help senior pedestrians be safe.

Scan for pedestrians at all times, especially: in low-light conditions; at crosswalks, intersections and near school zones and playgrounds; and in residential areas. Scan ahead as you approach these areas. Check behind if you stop and scan once more before you start moving again. Shoulder check in both directions and scan the intersection before turning.

For more information

- Attend a *Living Well, Driving Well* workshop for mature drivers. Find out when there will be a workshop in your community. Call toll-free 1-877-297-2254 or e-mail MDrivers@bcaa.com
- Visit our website at MatureDrivers.ca
- Visit your local BCAA office for a copy of the *Mature Driver's Handbook*.



MatureDrivers.ca

