



# 6 WAYS TO AVOID WINTER FALLS

THESE EVERYDAY SITUATIONS CAN TRIP YOU UP, BUT SMART STRATEGIES WILL KEEP YOU STEADY.

Winter is a high-risk time for injuries from slips and falls—but the good news is that most falls are preventable. Here, Frank Femino, MD, Director of Orthopedics and John Fontanetta, MD, Chairman of Emergency Medicine at Clara Maass Medical Center, give their best advice on avoiding common falling hazards:

## HAZARD #1: HURRYING.

**PREVENTION:** When it's cold outside, people take shortcuts or try to walk more quickly so that they can

get inside where it's warmer. "Many falls happen because of hurrying," says Dr. Femino. "You don't have time to shovel the steps, so you figure you'll just hold on to the rail. You're rushing to make an appointment, so you don't pay attention to the things that surround you."

"Give yourself plenty of time to get where you're going," says Dr. Fontanetta. "Walk slowly and carefully, taking slower, smaller steps and keeping your weight over your feet. And keep your hands out of your pockets so they're available to block the fall if necessary. If you're going to fall, using your arms and hands to lessen the impact will help you avoid head trauma."

explains Dr. Femino. "If you go out without proper outdoor clothing, and your legs are cold, they can't react quickly if you slip or lose your balance."

Don't run outside—even just to pick up the newspaper—without proper winter clothes, including hat, gloves and coat. (At the same time, too much bundling up can actually hinder mobility and affect balance. Choose clothing that's both warm and light, like lightweight down vests, jackets and coats.)

In addition, make sure you're comfortably warm inside, so that your muscles are warmed up even before you go out.

## HAZARD #3: FLOORS MADE SLIPPERY BY WET SHOES.

**PREVENTION:** At home, get in the habit of taking off your shoes or boots—and asking guests to do the same—right inside the entrance. Then, change into indoor shoes or slippers with good treads. "They should



## HAZARD #2: COLD MUSCLES AND SLOWER REACTION TIMES.

**PREVENTION:** "When your muscles are cold they tend to become more rigid,"



FRANK FEMINO, MD



JOHN FONTANETTA, MD