



be slippers that hold onto your feet well—not something you just slip into,” says Dr. Fontanetta.

Slippery floors are particularly hazardous in offices or stores, where the wet shoes of many people create slick conditions. Be cautious in public places, and make sure your own shoes or boots have good traction and ankle support.



**HAZARD #4:
UNNECESSARY
TRIPS DURING A
STORM.**

PREVENTION: Many people think it’s important to keep appointments or get their shopping done even though conditions are hazardous. Stay inside unless your task is truly an emergency, says Dr. Femino. “I tell my patients to call me and cancel their appointment if it’s icy or snowy out. I want them to be safe,” he says. “There are very few things that can’t wait until after a snowstorm to be taken care of.”



**HAZARD #5:
YOUR HOME’S ICY
WALKWAYS AND
DRIVEWAYS.**

PREVENTION: You have to go out onto the walkway or driveway to get it cleared—but before it’s cleared, a snow-covered driveway is a fall waiting to happen. “Keep a bucket of sand near your front or back door and throw a handful of sand on

your steps before you go out,” advises Dr. Femino. “You can do the same thing with salt—even table salt—but if you’re worried about the effect on the environment or neighborhood pets, there are pet-friendly ice melts available. You can also use clean kitty litter for traction.”

In most apartment complexes or senior buildings, the pathways are shoveled and salted for the residents, Dr. Femino notes. “But if you live in your own home, it’s better to pay a snow removal service or a neighborhood kid to clear your driveway and walkways rather than doing it on your own and risk hurting yourself.”



**HAZARD #6:
PARKING LOTS.**

PREVENTION: “This is a huge hazard,” says Dr. Femino. “You drive into a parking lot and step out not knowing what the surface is like.” Park in a well-lit area as close to your destination as possible, and take extra care when stepping out of your vehicle.

“Getting out of the car is an awkward movement—you have to twist and stand at the same time, which can be especially difficult for someone with arthritis in their knees or hips,” says Dr. Fontanetta. “To get out of the car, take your time to

**AVOIDING FALLS
AS YOU AGE**

Falls are more likely as people age, due to a combination of factors including a declining sense of balance, reduced muscle strength and vision and hearing issues. To stay safe, Dr. Fontanetta advises:

- **Practice balance and strength exercises all year.** If you do lose your balance, having good muscle strength lets you recover by regaining your footing or grabbing on to a railing to support yourself.
- **Have your eyes checked.** Keep your vision sharp. Go to the eye doctor to make sure contacts or eyeglasses prescriptions are current.
- **Be mindful about medications.** Everyone reacts differently to medications, so any kind can potentially impair your balance or make you unsteady. Be especially cautious when starting a new medication.

swing both legs out and plant them firmly on the ground before moving. Feel around and steady yourself on the door frame before you start walking.”

It’s also smart to keep a flashlight, and even a small container of sand or salt, in your car so you can deal with icy patches.

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