

# Safety Canada

THE MEMBER NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADA SAFETY COUNCIL

## Halloween Safety

October is rife with holidays and fall activities, and every day brings us a little closer to Halloween. For children, it can be a great time to put on a disguise and spook out the neighbourhood. As your little ghosts and goblins prepare for another candy-hunting season, there are a myriad of ways you can help keep them safe and happy.

First, be prepared. Make sure your child is dressed in a brightly-coloured costume or uses reflective stickers so that oncoming traffic and fellow pedestrians can see them coming. Also, keep in mind that masks often obstruct vision and make it difficult for children to breathe; use non-toxic makeup or face paint instead. Make sure any props your child carries, like a wand or a sword, are flexible. If your child falls, a flexible prop will give and be less likely to hurt them.

Strive for a trouble-free trick-or-treating session. If your child is 10 years old or younger, go with them on their rounds and try to be home before it gets dark.

Older children who want to go out alone should carry a cell phone and go in a group if possible. Remind them to take a flashlight and only to visit houses that have lit porch lights. It is best to stick to the neighbourhoods that children are familiar with, but if they want to go to a new area be sure to emphasize that they should be wary of strangers. Once they get home, sort through the candy and toss anything with signs of tampering, any loose candy, spoiled items or any homemade treats.

Pumpkin carving can be a fun way to decorate the house. Never let your children handle knives, though. Instead, let them draw the design on the pumpkin and you can do the carving. Let your children get messy by scooping out the guts of the pumpkin by hand, rather than with a knife. Once the pumpkin is ready, illuminate your jack-o-lantern with a glow stick instead of a burning candle to reduce the risk of burns.

Be sure your home is safe for visiting

trick-or-treaters by removing obstructions in the driveway or walkway. Provide a well-lit entrance and keeping your pets away from the children, even if you believe them to be harmless.

When driving on Halloween, remember that popular trick-or-treat hours (particularly for younger children) are during typical rush hour periods and in the early evening. Slow down and stay alert in residential areas. Driving with your full headlights on will help you spot children at greater distances, and help them see you sooner as well. Remember that costumes can block a child's field of vision, so they may not see your vehicle. Be sure to be on the lookout for trick-or-treaters at intersections, on medians and curbs. Always enter and exit driveways carefully, checking your blind spots several times.

As always, if you attend any Halloween parties, drink responsibly and make arrangements to get home safely.

*Happy Halloween!*

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## President's Perspective

Picture this: It's a cool autumn night as you drive home from work. Without warning, a deer runs across the highway and you hit it. The collision damages the vehicle, kills the deer and might have injured you or your passengers. An unusual event? Perhaps in the heart of Vancouver or Halifax, but a common occurrence in much of rural Canada.

Naturally, the numbers of animals and vehicles in a particular area have a direct bearing on the number of road kills. For example, Ontario's Manitoulin Island, an area of low traffic volume, reports around 100 deer are killed each year of a total deer population estimated at 15,000. This compares with south-western Ontario, where some counties report over 100 deer killed in a single fall month.

In the late fall, the mating season begins and bucks tend to wander along highways. The hazard increases as deer begin their annual winter migration. In the southern parts of Canada, the migration time may differ slightly because of varying terrain and weather conditions.

Road crossings are more common at certain times of day. The greatest percentage of road kills occurs after dusk, when deer are actively feeding. When driving through wildlife-prone areas at night, keep your headlights on high beam as much as possible and keep the windshield and headlights as clean as practicable. This will increase the distance at which you might see an animal, giving you more time to take appropriate action.

At night, deer behave in an unexpected fashion. After a deer crosses the road in front of a vehicle, the driver often speeds up only to have his grill redesigned. The deer, blinded by the car lights, may try to return to the safety of the area it just vacated. If you see a deer or other animal on the roadside, slow down, switch your headlight to low beam and beep your horn to attract the animal's attention well in advance. If it doesn't move, be prepared to stop.

Large animals, such as deer, bear, and moose aren't the only moving hazards on the roads. Our highways are also plagued by such fur-bearing animals as beavers, raccoons, foxes, muskrats and skunks.

Even cats, dogs and livestock can be problematic from drivers. Defensive driving and never letting your guard down against animal hazards is a must. It's the driver's responsibility to avoid collisions with deer or other animals, since they were here long before us. Besides, we humans are the more intelligent creatures. Let's prove it.

**Safety, It's an Attitude**



Jack Smith, President



## ON THE JOB

**Trips, Slips and Falls**

Trips, slips and falls are common causes of injuries at home and work. One of the best ways to reduce your risk of taking a tumble is to improve your strength and balance.

**Strength**

Strengthening your leg muscles reduces the chance of falling if you do lose your balance, as strong legs are pillars that support and help stabilize you. While any activity that uses your legs is good, it is important to find something you enjoy. Here are a couple of easy suggestions to keep you strong and on the move!

- **Brisk walking.** Walking requires no special equipment other than a pair of supportive shoes. Make an after-dinner walk part of your daily routine or walk to pick up light groceries. There are many simple ways to incorporate walking into your routine, and even a short walk a few times a week can make a noticeable difference.
- **Strength training.** Exercises such as leg extensions that target specific leg muscles can often be easily done at home. Leg extensions can be incorporated into your routine while watching TV or sitting at the kitchen table. While seated, straighten one leg and gently lift it off the ground to a height that is comfortable. Hold for 10 seconds, and then slowly lower that leg. Repeat this exercise with the other leg. As your strength grows, add ankle weights to increase resistance and give your legs even more of a workout.
- **Join a community group.** There's no need to join an expensive gym! If you enjoy working out with others, community centres often offer affordable exercise programs for different age groups that will get you moving and socializing.

**Balance**

An important element in your ability to stay on your feet is balance. A couple of factors can negatively impact your sense of balance and cause dizziness or other assorted issues. Poor eyesight, some medications and improper nutrition can all lead to problems. Keep the following tips in mind when focusing on balance.

- **Be diligent about eye health.** Make sure you have an annual eye examination. It doesn't take long and can have tremendous long-term health benefits.
- **Review any medicinal side effects.** Talk with your pharmacist or family physician about any possible effects from your medications, vitamins and herbal supplements.
- **Maintain good nutrition.** Eat regularly and make sure you drink enough non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverages. Good stamina reduces the risk of sudden dizziness or passing out. Feeling dizzy or faint could also be caused by a medical condition – see a health professional for an evaluation if you regularly or increasingly experience these symptoms.

Strength and balance work together to keep you steady. Many activities that contribute to maintaining and improving balance also help build strength, such as swimming, cycling, Tai Chi, yoga, golf and dancing. Anything that gets you on your feet and moving helps.

You might also consider seeing a chiropractor. He or she is an expert in back, muscle and joint health, and can assess your strength and balance and prescribe specific exercises for you.



## SPORTS AND LEISURE

# Pedometers

A growing stack of peer-reviewed medical research is strengthening links between whole-body health and even modest physical activity. Just by walking, you can reduce your risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, cancer, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, dementia, depression and more.

In addition, walking is one of the most affordable and convenient exercises. And for senior citizens, walking provides a safe way to stay healthy.

Adding steps to your day and improving your fitness comes down to changing your behavior and being aware of your actions, explains Dr. Shannon Bredin, a behavior specialist and assistant professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Kinesiology.

According to Dr. Bredin, tracking is an effective form of self-monitoring that can motivate and improve the understanding of your current behavior. But it isn't always easy to accurately quantify, especially if you want to reach the experts' recommended 10,000 steps per day.

Today, however, easy-to-use products are available and designed to do exactly that. A traditional pedometer can be clipped on to your waistband to count your steps and they come in all shapes and sizes. If you'd

rather opt for a high-tech version, a free pedometer app is available for use with your smartphone. Some of the more expensive phones also estimate your calories burned and come with features such as a stopwatch and a pulse monitor.

"You don't want your goals to be too easy so that there is no satisfaction in fulfilling them, but you also can't make them so

difficult that they frustrate you," says Dr. Bredin. "The secret to setting goals is to strike a balance between achievability and creating a real challenge for yourself."

Dr. Bredin advises that keeping track of a goal increases accountability. It is also beneficial to choose an objective measure such as the number of steps you want to take in a day, rather than a subjective goal.



## SPORTS AND LEISURE

## Chores

Autumn's falling leaves are accompanied by a range of tasks, from taking the boat off the water to winterizing your cottage. These seemingly routine jobs can cause a lot of problems if they're not handled correctly, and can lead to injuries and lost productivity.

Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind while doing chores this fall.

**Winterizing the cottage**

- Shut off and drain water from any pipes and plumbing. Pipes that still have water in them can burst when the water freezes, which can cause property damage. If you plan on using the cottage during the winter, be sure to leave the heat on at 10 C or higher to prevent the water from freezing in the pipes.
- Some forms of heating are better left turned off, even if you plan on visiting your cottage throughout the winter. If you use baseboard heating, turn it off and use another heating source. If left unattended, electric baseboard heaters can cause a fire and burn your cottage.
- Ask a friend to shovel your driveway and decks if you won't be at your cottage. A lived-in look reduces the risks of being victimized by a break-in.

**Winterizing the boat**

- Be careful around the water. Drownings can occur in only a few seconds, and many drowning victims never intended on being in the water in the first place. Wear a personal flotation device and exercise caution.
- Check the hull of your boat for any stress fractures. Repairing the fractures now will save you headaches once the snow and ice are gone.



- Be aware of freezing, corrosion and fuel degradation as you winterize your boat's motor. Power up the engine until it reaches its running temperature, then change the oil and filter. You should also flush the engine with fresh water and store it in a vertical position to make sure the water drains completely and does not freeze inside the engine.
- To avoid corrosion, spray fogging oil into the carburetor while the engine is still running, and into the cylinders once you've turned off the engine. Rotating the engine a few times allows for a more thorough coating, which will leave it less vulnerable to the elements.

Canada Safety Council publishes Living Safety, a quarterly off-the-job safety magazine. For more information on how to subscribe and raise safety awareness for your employees, please contact Carole Deavey at 613-739-1535 ext. 231, or by email at [c.deavey@safety-council.org](mailto:c.deavey@safety-council.org).

## HEALTH SMARTS

**Dust Mite Busters**

(Wellness Letter, June 2012) – In greatly enlarged photographs, dust mites look like something from a horror movie. But they are actually on the clean-up committee: they eat our discarded skin cells, as well as animal dander, pollen, fungi, bacteria, and other microscopic organic material in the domestic environment. They thrive in mattresses, pillows, carpets, and clothing. Thousands of mites can live in just one gram of dust.

Dust mites don't carry disease and don't bite, fortunately, but they can trigger asthma, hay fever, and skin reactions in some people. In fact, dust mites are probably the most common indoor allergen, especially in warm, humid climates and for people with asthma. They are virtually nonexistent in very dry climates.

If you have asthma, a skin condition, or other reaction you think might be caused by dust mites, consult a board-certified allergist for a diagnosis. If mites are the culprit, try the following strategies:

- Buy a good vacuum cleaner with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter. Ordinary vacuuming will only send dust mites and their particles into the air. It's not clear how much a HEPA filter actually helps with allergies, but it's worth trying. Ideally, if you're allergic, get someone else to vacuum and dust. Vacuum bags should be changed often, since mites and debris can get out.
- If your allergies are severe, remove carpets and upholstered furnishings, especially in your bedroom. Install wooden or plastic blinds instead of drapes and curtains. Some products claiming to kill dust mites in carpets can irritate the respiratory tract.
- Wash bed linens and blankets in hot water and use a hot dryer. (Dry cleaning may be less effective at killing mites—research is inconsistent.) Very hot water is best.
- Use impermeable covers to encase mattresses and pillows (and blankets that can't be washed), which can harbor lots of dust mites. Studies have been conflicting about how much this helps, however.
- Replacing pillows periodically makes sense, which means you're better off not buying pricey ones. Dust mites can infest all kinds of pillows—those made of feathers, polyester, foam, or other synthetics. There's no consistent evidence that one type is preferable.
- Since dust mites thrive under humid conditions, try using a dehumidifier in the bedroom in damp climates. In warm months, use an air conditioner, which helps lower humidity. Be sure bathrooms and laundry rooms are well vented—this reduces humidity in the rest of the house. Obviously, don't use a humidifier.
- Don't bother with air purifiers or air duct cleaning services—they will do little or nothing to reduce dust mites.

## HOME SAFE HOME

**Storm Safety**

Now that summer is in the rear-view mirror, the fall months offer some of their own challenges. In particular, thunderstorms and strong winds are quite common but the aftermath can be unpleasant and devastating without taking proper precautions. Here are some simple tips to help you keep your home safe through severe weather.

- Adhere to regular outdoor home maintenance. According to a recent TD Insurance poll, less than half of Canadians check for blockages that prevent water from draining away from their homes. Additionally, only 36 per cent remove weak branches and trees from their property. Neglecting these small jobs can lead to floods and damage to the home's exterior. Did you know that downspouts should extend at least 1.8 metres away from the house's foundation? To ensure your home is properly maintained and can withstand a strong storm, regularly inspect your home's exterior.
- Secure loose objects. Loose objects can cause damage. For example, a lawn chair picked up by a strong gust of wind can slam against your house and destroy siding or break a window. Take time to ensure all loose objects are secured to the ground, stowed away in a shed or brought inside the house.
- Know what valuables you own. Less than 25 per cent of Canadians keep a detailed inventory of their valuables. Noting your valuables' serial numbers, taking photographs and recording the purchase dates in a safe place will make insurance claims easier in the event of water or storm damage.



## PUBLIC SAFETY

# Peanuts in School

Now that school is in full swing for the year, you'll be packing plenty of lunches and treats for the kids. As you're doing so, remember that roughly six percent of young children are affected by food allergies, as reported by Health Canada. Peanut allergies often top the list of problem foods. When packing your child's lunches and snacks, make sure the food is peanut-free!

Many Canadian schools already ban peanuts and peanut products, and restrict certain food items including pecans, walnuts and cashews. As a parent, you have to stay vigilant and attentive for the safety of your children and their classmates.

To ensure your kids' lunches are safe to bring to school, start by reading the school's policy on food allergens in the classroom – make sure you know what is and isn't allowed. Many manufacturers have made it easier in recent years to identify peanut-free foods, with no-nut-guarantees. Others food companies have moved production to completely nut-free facilities, so shop for these sorts of products. If someone at your child's school is affected by peanut or other food allergies, they might experience symptoms ranging from a runny nose to a hive breakout to an anaphylactic shock. By being aware of what

you pack in your child's lunch, you are helping children with allergies avoid needless discomfort and, sometimes, life-threatening situations.

Avoiding products with nuts or other allergens may be a chore at first, but it's the smart and responsible thing to do. Once established, a peanut-free environment is easy to maintain and helps ensure everyone has a happy and safe lunchtime.



## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

# Do you know how to stay safe this Thanksgiving?

*Take this quiz to find out.*

- 1) You should buy your turkey no more than two days before cooking it.  
**True.**  
Buying your turkey a maximum of two days before cooking it gives you the best chance of keeping it fresh and safe to eat.
- 2) Turkey should be thawed at room temperature.  
**False.**  
Thaw your turkey in the refrigerator or in cold water, changing the water every half hour.
- 3) Symptoms of food-borne illnesses are always visible immediately.  
**False.**  
Although the effects can occasionally be seen instantaneously, it's also possible that they may not appear for over a month. The best way to avoid them entirely is safe preparation and handling of your food.
- 4) Your oven should be set to at least 350 degrees Fahrenheit (177 degrees Celsius) and the turkey should be cooked until the thickest part of the thigh or breast reaches 185 degrees Fahrenheit (85 degrees Celsius).  
**True.**  
Use a meat thermometer to be sure you've reached the appropriate internal temperature. Cooking your Thanksgiving turkey to this temperature will kill any harmful bacteria present in the meat, which will greatly reduce the risk of food-borne illness.
- 5) It is okay to cook stuffing in the same dish as the turkey.  
**False.**  
Stuffing must be cooked in a separate dish or on the stovetop. If you cook it in the same dish, you run a very high risk of cross-contamination that can easily be avoided with a bit of precaution.
- 6) Leftovers should be stored in the refrigerator as soon as possible and placed in an uncovered, shallow container.  
**True.**  
Placing leftovers in a shallow container allows them to cool down quicker, reducing the amount of time the food is exposed to room temperature. The less time it is allowed to hover at that temperature, the less time it is given to accumulate bacteria.
- 7) Perishable foods shouldn't be kept at room temperature for more than two hours at a time.  
**True.**  
The longer perishable food is kept at room temperature, the more unwanted bacteria it will accumulate. If you're entertaining friends or family and need large quantities of food, taking out small portions and replenishing them as needed is a viable option.
- 8) It's okay to estimate how long food has been in the oven.  
**False.**  
Where possible, use a timer when cooking foods. This tactic is especially important when preparing food that requires a long cooking time, because being even a few minutes off can make or break the meal.

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