



# Halifax Chiropractic Clinic



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## Best Foot Forward - The Five W's

by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

Throughout life you always try to put your 'best foot forward'. Whether it be meeting new people, at a job interview, or meeting the new in-laws.

But as we get older, it is important to ensure that when walking, you are indeed putting your 'best foot forward'. You don't want to, as your mother may have said, "trip over your own two feet".

Humour aside though, falls are not funny – especially as we get older. The Canadian Chiropractic Association recognized the importance of preventing falls and developed the 'Best Foot Forward' program.

### WHO?

- Are you over the age of 65?
- Are you living independently?

If you answered "yes" to both of these questions, you have a one in three chance of having a fall this year!

And if you do fall, you have a 75% chance of needing medical attention, and if so, there is a 90% chance that you will be seen in a hospital emergency department.

Those are not very encouraging statistics. Compared to those under the age of 65 years of age, your risk is 9 times greater!

Ninety percent (90%) of all hip fractures in seniors are because of a fall. Of greater concern is that 40% of admissions to nursing homes are due to falls. And it gets worse – 20% of those people who have hip fractures die within a year.

So avoiding falls is absolutely important.

### WHERE?

Believe it or not – at 'home sweet home' is where the majority of falls occur. Yes it is true. There are lots of things around the house that can cause falls:

- Stairs – these are the number one culprit. Be sure to use the handrails and remove your reading glasses when going up or down stairs.
- Loose area rugs – they can slip and bunch up – making them easy to trip over.
- Shoes and boots by the door.
- Being in a hurry, rushing to answer the front door when the bell rings.
- Laundry in the middle of the bedroom floor.
- Wearing loose fitting slippers with poor treads.
- 'Fido' or 'Fluffy' – yes – unfortunately having a dog or cat is a risk factor. When they get underfoot in the kitchen, looking for a snack, it can be the 'recipe' for disaster.
- Climbing up on a chair to reach something on the top shelf – not only is this risky for hip fractures but also compression fractures of the spine if you fall.
- Taking a bath – getting into the tub without a non-slip mat on the bottom.

### WHEN?

Falls happen at all times of the day and night. Night is especially a concern. If you get up quickly to go to the bathroom, you may get a bit dizzy, get your feet caught on the clothes you left on the floor, or trip over Fido who thinks it might be time for breakfast.

Make sure you keep all your hallways, stairs and doorways clear of all objects, especially the

path that you would take in the middle of the night to the bathroom.

Another helpful hint is to place lots of nightlights around the house and especially by the stairs. They are an inexpensive way to make your house safer.

### **WHY?**

As one gets older, it is important to be aware that your balance and eyesight may not be as good as it was a few years ago.

Medications, sore feet, stiff joints and weaker muscles can be factors as well. Exercising is important, and in particular, walking can be good for helping to maintain your balance, muscle tone, health of your heart, improve circulation and help to maintain your bone density.

But it is important to make your home safer and maintain independence and avoid injuries. In the [Report on Seniors Falls in Canada](#) the Public Health Agency of Canada has recognized that falls can have a significant impact on the lives and wellbeing of our older population.

### **WHAT?**

So what can you do?

Part of the 'Best Foot Forward' program is designed for seniors to help themselves. It provides practical tips and advice on making your home safer.

Be sure to:

- Wear supportive shoes with non-slip soles.
- Have your vision and hearing checked annually.
- Review your medications with your physician to see if any may have side-effects that could increase your chances of falling.

See your local chiropractor to learn more about the Best Foot Forward program. It is a great public education program developed by the Canadian Chiropractic Association to help seniors. Check the website of the CCA for more helpful tips and advice [www.ccachiro.org](http://www.ccachiro.org).

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