

Feeling

Good!

**Cannabis  
and aging**

**Walk yourself  
to better health**

**Stretching  
those dollars  
and dimes**

**A Resource for Adults 50+**

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*One good thing:*  
Write down something that made  
you smile today – big or small

# Welcome!

Welcome to the latest edition of Feeling Good - your go-to guide for living well, aging actively, and feeling your best every day.

Whether you're sipping your morning coffee, heading out for a walk, or just taking a quiet moment for yourself, this magazine is here to support your journey to better health and happiness. Inside, you'll find practical tips, surprising facts, and a few chuckles - all designed with adults 55+ in mind.

This edition dives into topics that matter most to you, like staying connected, making informed choices about alcohol and medications, protecting yourself from illness, and keeping your body and mind strong. We've even added a guided breathing exercise to help you unwind when life gets a little too loud.

So take a deep breath, get comfy, and enjoy the read. You deserve to feel good - today and every day.



# Practice Being Mindful

Practicing mindfulness can help you cope with changes and enjoy life to the fullest. Mindfulness is paying attention to what is going on in the moment in a non-judgmental way. It's about what you are feeling, thinking and sensing in the moment. Practicing mindfulness has many health benefits. It has been found to decrease stress, depression and anxiety as well as increase an individual's overall feeling of well-being. Being mindful is something all of us can practice every day!

How can you practice mindfulness? Here are some tips:

- Take time to relax in a quiet space
- Take deep breaths when feeling stressed
- Connect with friends and family
- Participate in community activities
- Try taking a yoga class or a walk on a trail
- Savor the moment, a flavour, or a smell

## Guided Breathing for Tension and Stress Relief

This short breathing exercise is designed to help ease physical tension and emotional stress. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, mentally fatigued, or simply need a moment of calm, this guide offers a gentle way to reset and restore balance.

## Step-by-Step Breathing Guide (2–3 minutes)

- 1. Find a comfortable position.**  
Sit or lie down. Close your eyes if you like, and let your shoulders relax.
- 2. Deep breath in through your nose (4 seconds).**  
Feel your belly expand as you breathe in. Inhale... 1... 2... 3... 4...
- 3. Hold your breath gently (4 seconds).**  
Hold... 1... 2... 3... 4...  
Exhale slowly through your mouth (6 seconds).
- 4. Let the air out like you're blowing through a straw.**  
Exhale... 1... 2... 3... 4... 5... 6...
- 5. Pause briefly (2 seconds).**  
Rest... 1... 2...  
Repeat this cycle 4–5 times. Let your thoughts drift by like clouds. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.

This exercise can be done anytime you feel tension building or need a moment of calm. It's especially helpful during stressful days, or when you need a mental reset.

Here's a mindfulness technique you can try!



# Feeling Good Inside and Out: Mental Health for Older Adults

Mental health is how we think, feel, and handle life and it is just as important as our physical health. As we age, life brings changes like retirement or health issues. Good mental health helps us enjoy life, stay connected to others and cope with those changes (even the ones we didn't ask for!).

Simple things like chatting with a friend, digging in the garden, reading a good book, or taking quiet time for yourself are healthy ways to maintain your mental health. Getting active is a treat for your mind too! Your brain loves a good walk, it's like a spa day for your thoughts.

## What's the Difference Between Mental Health and Mental Illness?

As we age, taking care of our mental well-being is just as important as looking after our physical health. It's helpful to understand that mental health and mental illness are not the same thing.

- **Mental Health** is a state of well-being, and includes how you think, feel, and manage daily life.
- **Mental Illness** is a medical condition that can seriously affect mood, thinking, or behavior.

About **1 in 5 Canadians** experiences a mental illness like depression or anxiety. These illnesses can make it harder to enjoy daily activities or stay connected. Whether or not you've ever been diagnosed with a mental illness, taking care of your mental health is always important.

## When to Get Help

If you are not feeling like yourself, and it has been going on for two weeks or more, it's a good idea to talk to your healthcare provider. Some signs to watch for:

- Trouble sleeping or eating
- Feeling tired or low energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually enjoy
- Feeling restless, frustrated or irritable
- Struggling to get out of bed or complete daily tasks

To get connected to non-emergency mental health services, call ConnexOntario at 1-866-531-2600 or text 247247 "CONNEX"

[durham.ca/connection](https://durham.ca/connection)

## Guide to Community Resources for Seniors and Older Adults:



# Many people don't know that **alcohol** is linked to **cancer**.

Let's talk about the facts.

If you drink alcohol, it's better for your health to drink less.



Get the Facts:



Durham Health Connection Line  
1-800-841-2729 or 905-668-2020  
[durham.ca/alcohol](http://durham.ca/alcohol)  
Dial 311 (within regional limits)



Canadian Centre  
on Substance Use  
and Addiction

# What's in your bottle?

Did you know alcohol is a leading preventable cause of death and health related harms, including certain cancers? When we think about cancer and its causes, we often think about smoking, ultraviolet rays and chemicals like arsenic. All of these substances are considered “class 1 carcinogens”, indicating that there is strong evidence that they can cause cancer. What many people find surprising is that alcohol is also a class 1 carcinogen (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Did you know that you don't have to be a heavy drinker to have an increased risk for cancer? As little as 1 to 2 standard drinks per week can increase the risk for 7 types of cancer (Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction [CCSA], 2023).

Alcohol has been linked to cancer of the mouth, neck, throat, liver, breast, colon and rectum.

It doesn't matter what type of alcohol you drink (beer, wine or spirits), the risk remains the same.

## So what can you do?

Any reduction of alcohol use has benefits. The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (2023), recommends:

- Count how many drinks you have in a week. Set a weekly drinking target.
- Stick to the limits you've set for yourself.
- Drink slowly. Drink lots of water.
- For every drink of alcohol, have one non-alcoholic drink.
- Choose alcohol-free or low-alcohol beverages.
- Eat before and while you're drinking.
- Have alcohol-free weeks or do alcohol-free activities.

## Alcohol Consumption Per Week

### 0 drinks per week

Not drinking has benefits, such as better health and better sleep.

No risk



### 1 to 2 standard drinks per week

You will likely avoid alcohol-related consequences for yourself and others.

Low risk



### 3 to 6 standard drinks per week

Your risk of developing several different types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer, increases.

Moderate risk



### 7 or more standard drinks per week

Your risk of heart disease or stroke increases.

### Each additional standard drink

Radically increases the risk of these alcohol-related consequences.

Increasingly high risk



Your current health and family health history can also impact your risk for getting heart disease and cancer. Speak to your healthcare provider about your personal risks from drinking alcohol.

[durham.ca/alcohol](https://durham.ca/alcohol)



## Quick Tips Corner

### Three Easy Ways to Feel Good Today:

- 😊 Take a short walk, even five minutes counts!
- 😊 Drink a glass of water now
- 😊 Call a friend just to say "hi"

# Eating Well – For Your Body And Your Budget

Healthy eating is important for older adults to keep the body and mind healthy, support independence and boost energy and mood! It helps:

- Lower the risk of health problems such as heart disease or diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers
- Keep muscles and bones strong
- Support focus, memory and staying alert

As we get age, we may need more of some nutrients – even if we feel less hungry or don't absorb nutrients as well. Cooking for one or two people, medication side effects, and taste changes can affect eating habits. Here are ways to help keep meals healthy and enjoyable.

## Canada's Food Guide

**Half your plate:** Vegetables and fruits

**One-quarter:** Whole grain foods

**One-quarter:** Protein foods (choose plant based options more often)

Canada's Food Guide recommends having a variety of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods that you enjoy. Use Canada's Food Guide plate and online for healthy meal ideas.



## Make every dollar count at the grocery store:

### Vegetables and fruit

- Frozen fruits and vegetables - use only what you need
- Fresh produce in season
- Long-lasting options like carrots, sweet potatoes, oranges, apples and bananas

### Protein Foods

- Beans, lentils, chickpeas, and tofu for soups and salads
- Eggs for quick meals with leftover veggies
- Canned fish for sandwiches or casseroles
- Less expensive cuts of meat - cook slowly
- Nuts, seeds, and nut butters for snacks or meal boosts

### Whole Grains

- Freeze whole grain bread - take out what you need
- Hot cereals like oatmeal with fruit
- Whole grain pasta and brown rice

### Savvy Shopping Tips

- Check what foods you have plan meals - even a few days ahead
- Use flyers and grocery apps to find deals and discount days
- Split large food packages with friends or neighbours
- Look high and low – eye level shelves often cost more
- Compare unit prices to find the best value
- Share tips with friends - community wisdom saves money

# Cannabis and Aging: What Older Adults Need to Know

More older adults are exploring cannabis to help with pain, sleep, or simply to relax. But as our bodies change with age, cannabis can affect us in new and sometimes unexpected ways.

If you are curious about trying cannabis, it's important to understand how it works, how it might interact with your medications, and what risks to watch out for. And remember - this article offers helpful information, but it does not replace medical advice. Talk to your healthcare provider before using cannabis.

## Cannabis 101: What Is It, Really?

Cannabis, (also known as marijuana, pot, or weed), comes from the cannabis plant and contains over 100 active compounds called cannabinoids. The two big players are:

- **THC (tetrahydrocannabinol):** This is the part that gives you the "high".
- **CBD (cannabidiol):** This one doesn't make you high but can make you sleepy. Researchers are studying its medical benefits.

Today's cannabis is stronger than it used to be. In the 1990s, dried cannabis had about 4% THC. Now it's often 15-20% and some extracts can go above 80%! More THC means stronger effects and high risks of impairment.

## How People Use Cannabis

There's more than one way to use cannabis, and each method affects your body differently:

- **Smoking or vaping:** You'll feel the effects quickly - within seconds to minutes. They can last up to 6 hours, with some effects lasting up to 24 hours
- **Edibles (food or drink):** These take longer to feel the effects - anywhere from 30 minutes to 4 hours - but the effects can last up to 12 hours or more. Be careful not to take too much too soon
- **Topicals (creams or oils):** These are applied to the skin, often marketed for pain or beauty. Scientific evidence that they work is still limited

## What You Might Feel

Cannabis affects everyone differently. You might feel relaxed and euphoric, but it can also cause:

- Trouble with memory or concentration
- Slower movement or reaction time, which can lead to falls and injury

Too much cannabis or products with high THC can cause:

- Anxiety or panic
- Fast heartbeat
- Nausea or vomiting
- Confusion or hallucinations

## Extra Caution for Older Adults

As we age, our bodies process substances differently. Cannabis might make you feel dizzy, forgetful, or slow to react – raising your risk of falls or injury. People with heart problems, mental health issues, or balance problems should not use cannabis. If you decide to try it, start low and go slow. A small dose can go a long way.

## Cannabis and Medications

Cannabis can change how your body handles medications. It might make some drugs stronger or weaker – including blood thinners, pain pills, and sleep aids.

Always talk to your healthcare provider before using cannabis, especially if you are on medications.

## Tips for Safer Cannabis Use

Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines offers good advice to reduce risks: Here are a few key tips:

- Avoid driving or using machinery: Cannabis can slow your reflexes and focus
- Go easy on THC: Less THC means fewer risks
- Avoid smoking: It can hurt your lungs. Edibles or vaping may be a safer option, but are not risk-free
- Use occasionally, not constantly: Frequent use can lead to health problems.
- Don't mix with alcohol or other drugs: This can amplify side effects
- Think about your mental health. Cannabis may worsen symptoms, especially for those with a history of mental health issues

## Helpful Resources

Want to learn more? Search for these trusted sources which offer great information:

Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines: Canada's lower-risk cannabis use guidelines - Canada.ca

Active Aging Canada "Cannabis and Older Adults":

<https://www.activeagingcanada.ca/participants/projects/cannabis-and-older-adults.htm>

Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction "Cannabis Use for Older Adults Guide": <https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-07/CCSA-Cannabis-Use-Older-Adults-Guide-2020-en.pdf>

McMaster University Optimal Aging Portal "Cannabis and Older Adults": <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/e-learning/cannabis-and-older-adults>





**Connection is one of  
life's best medicines**



# Smiles for Life: Oral Health Tips for Older Adults

Many people believe that losing teeth is just a normal part of getting older - but that's not true! Today, more and more older adults are keeping most, if not all, of their natural teeth. And that's great news - because a healthy mouth plays a big role in enjoying life to the fullest.

Whether you have all your natural teeth or wear dentures, taking care of your mouth is just as important as looking after the rest of your body. A clean, pain-free mouth helps you eat well, speak clearly, sleep better, and feel confident when you smile.

## Why Oral Health Matters More Than Ever

As we age, our oral health can affect more than just our teeth. Problems like tooth loss, dry mouth, or dentures that don't fit properly can make it harder to eat the nutritious foods your body needs. And without those nutrients, it's harder to fight off infections and inflammation - including gum disease (periodontal disease).

Gum disease often shows up as red, swollen gums that bleed easily. Left untreated, it can lead to serious health issues. In fact, research has linked poor oral health to conditions like pneumonia, diabetes, and heart disease in older adults.

## Simple Steps for a Healthy Mouth

Here's how you can keep your smile strong and healthy by removing plaque, food particles and bacteria from your teeth:

- Brush twice a day for two minutes using a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Floss once a day to clean the areas your toothbrush can't reach - about a third of your tooth's surface!
- Use flossing aids if traditional floss is tricky to manage.
- If you wear dentures, remove them at night and clean them daily.

## Need Help with Dental Care? You're Not Alone.

If you're 65 or older and don't have dental coverage, the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP) might be able to help. This government-funded program offers free routine dental care for low-income seniors.

Dental care services are only provided through Durham Region Health Department, Oral Health Division's dental clinic.

## Who Can Apply?

You may qualify if you:

- Are 65 or older
- Live in Ontario
- Don't have other dental benefits (like private insurance)
- Meet the income requirements (for individuals or couples)



## How to Apply

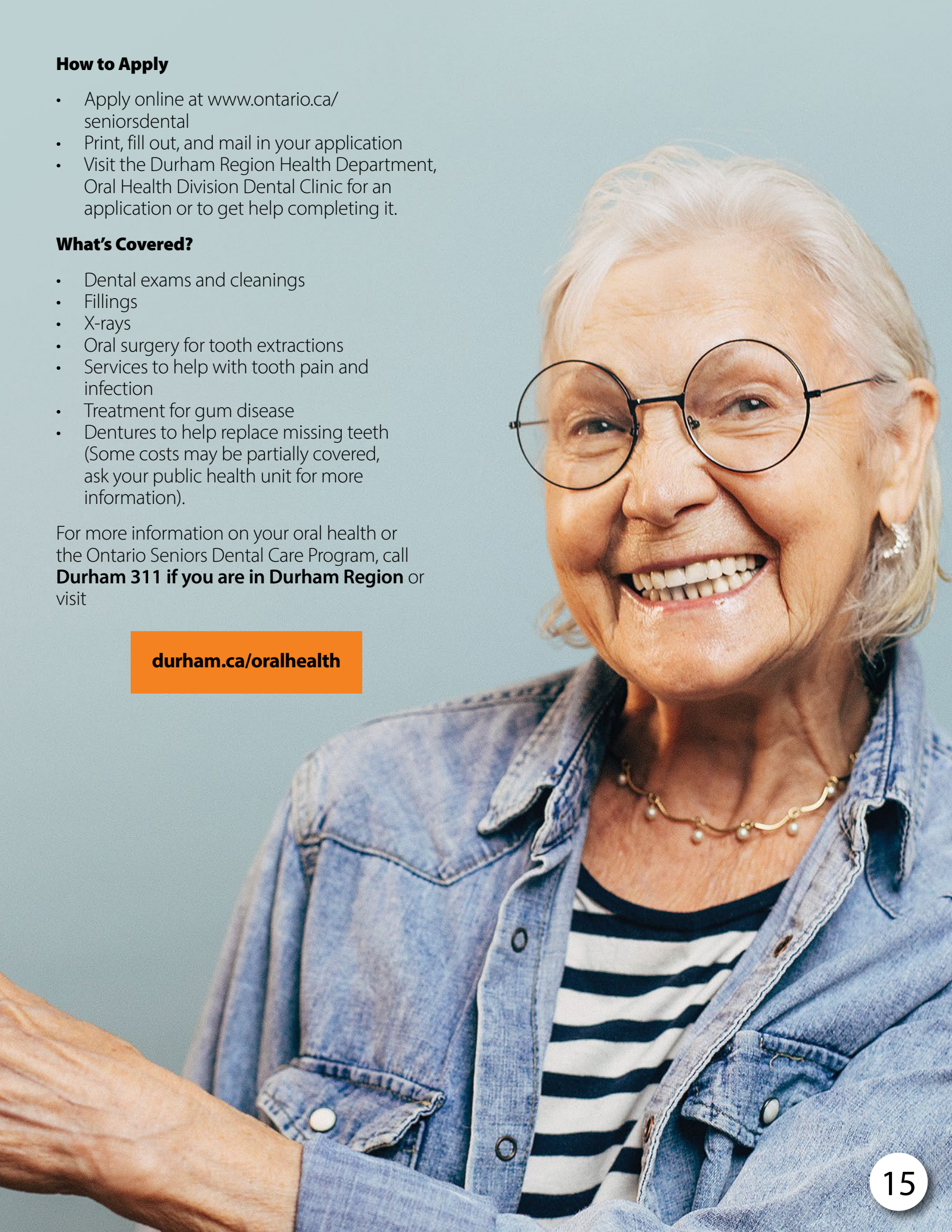
- Apply online at [www.ontario.ca/seniorsdental](http://www.ontario.ca/seniorsdental)
- Print, fill out, and mail in your application
- Visit the Durham Region Health Department, Oral Health Division Dental Clinic for an application or to get help completing it.

## What's Covered?

- Dental exams and cleanings
- Fillings
- X-rays
- Oral surgery for tooth extractions
- Services to help with tooth pain and infection
- Treatment for gum disease
- Dentures to help replace missing teeth (Some costs may be partially covered, ask your public health unit for more information).

For more information on your oral health or the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program, call **Durham 311 if you are in Durham Region** or visit

[durham.ca/oralhealth](http://durham.ca/oralhealth)



**Try to:**

- **Limit recreational screen time to less than 3 hours per day**
- **Keep total sedentary time under 8 hours**
- **Break up long periods of sitting with light movements – even a few minutes helps!**



# Walk, rest, repeat!

## Building a Healthier 24-Hour Day

Looking ahead to your future? Whether you're investing for retirement or just hoping to feel your best, investing in your health is one of the best moves you can make. It is important to be physically active to be ready for all the exciting stages in your life. Becoming an older adult is one of those stages!

### Move Your Way to Better Health

Did you know adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity each week? That's just over 20 minutes a day – and yes, brisk walking, cycling and dancing count. Even just 10 minutes of activity at a time can add up quickly!

To build strength and support your bones, add muscle and bone-strengthening activities at least twice a week. And don't forget balance exercises – they are especially important as we age. All activities contribute to a healthier 24-hour day!

Being active helps reduce the risk of:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease and stroke
- Dementia
- Type 2 diabetes
- Certain cancers
- Osteoporosis

Plus, it boosts your mood, improves strength, and helps you feel good! What an investment in your future! Think of walking as a daily meeting with your health – no calendar invite required.

### Easy Ways to Get Moving

- Join an exercise class or walking group
- Take up an old favourite sport or try something new
- Take the dog for a walk each day
- Walk to the park with your grandchildren
- Try walking for ten minutes or more at a time and build up to 30 minutes every day
- Go for a walk with friends and family
- Try new routes so you don't get bored.
- Explore one of the many beautiful trails Durham Region has to offer

The first step is to set a goal; like aiming for 150 minutes of physical activity each week. Next, choose your activity and plan when and where you'll do it. Track your progress using a journal or app to stay motivated. Every step counts and the more you move now, the more likely you will keep moving later. After all, there are leisurely walks to enjoy and mountains to climb!

### Rest Well, Sit Less

Sleep is important too! Adults 18-64 should aim for 7 to 9 hours of good-quality, uninterrupted sleep each night. If you are 65 or older, aim for 7 to 8 hours. Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day helps build healthy sleep habits.

Too much sitting (sedentary time) can negatively affect your health.



# Breathe Easier: Your Guide to Tobacco and Vape-Free Living

It's never too late to quit smoking or vaping. No matter your age, quitting brings real health benefits from easier breathing, to a lower risk of serious health issues like COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer. Whether you're ready to quit or just thinking it, there are tools and support to help you take the first step.

## Thinking About Quitting? You've Got Options

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to quitting, but there are tools to help you get started:

- Call a quit line like Smoker's Helpline
- Talk to your healthcare provider
- Join a quit smoking group
- Try nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): Products like gum, patches, and lozenges can ease cravings. Visit STOP on the Net website for free nicotine replacement options.

One of the best ways to stay on track is to make a quit plan. It helps you to set goals, track progress, manage cravings, and choose the tools that work best for you. You can build your own by using Health Canada's free online quit planner:

Click <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/campaigns/quit-smoking/planner.html> (or search "Health Canada Quit Planner")

**It's never too late to quit smoking or vaping.**

## Tips to Help You Quit

- Create a supportive space: Toss out extra cigarette packs and ashtrays.
- Manage stress: Try deep breathing, walking, mindfulness, or yoga.
- Find healthy swaps: Chew sugar-free gum, snack on carrot sticks, or get moving with light exercise.
- Lean on your circle: Ask friends and family for support.

Every step forward counts. You might need more than one try - and that's okay!

## Not Ready to Quit Yet? Start by Creating Smoke-Free Spaces

Even if you're not ready to quit, you can still protect others by making your home and car smoke and vape-free.

When you smoke or vape, the people and pets around you breathe in harmful particles. These particles can also cling to clothes, skin, and furniture. There is no safe level of second-hand smoke, and exposure is linked to:

- Cancer
- Chest tightness and breathing problems
- Decreased lung function
- Stroke
- Worsening asthma in children
- Low birth weight

A woman with curly hair, wearing a pink shirt, is smiling and holding a white mug. She is looking off to the side. The background is a light-colored wall with a window.

### **Tips to reduce second and third hand smoke/vapour:**

- Make your home and car smoke-free zones.
- Smoke or vape outside away from doors and windows.
- Wash your hands and face and change clothes after smoking.
- Keep smoking clothes outside your living space.
- Plan for outdoor breaks during long drives.

### **Want to Learn More?**

**Visit:**

[www.durham.ca/tobaccoandvaping](http://www.durham.ca/tobaccoandvaping)

**or call**

**311 (within Durham Region);**

**Durham Health Connection Line:**

**905-668-2020**

# Stretching Those Dollars and Dimes

Are you finding it harder to make ends meet? You are not alone. Whether you have recently retired or are feeling the pinch of rising costs, there are supports available in Durham Region that can help you stretch your budget.

Here are some helpful programs and services that may help you save money.

## **Low-Cost & Subsidized Recreation**

Staying active doesn't have to cost you a lot of money. Many municipalities in Durham offer low-cost memberships and classes for older adults. Whether it's a swim, a stretch, or a social gathering, there is something for everyone.



## Find programs at

[www.durham.ca/recsubsidy](http://www.durham.ca/recsubsidy)

or call your local centre:

- **Ajax:** 905-427-8811 | Audley 905-427-2468 | McLean 905-428-7711
- **Brock:** 705-432-2355 ext. 243
- **Clarington:** 905-623-3379 ext. 2552
- **Oshawa:** 905-436-3311
- **Pickering:** 905-420-4620 ext. 3601
- **Scugog:** 905-985-8698
- **Uxbridge:** 905-852-9181 ext. 400
- **Whitby:** 905-655-2893

### Transit Assistance Program (TAP)

Getting around shouldn't be too expensive for you. If you receive Ontario Works or ODSP, you may qualify for reduced-cost unlimited access to Durham Region Transit. It's a budget-friendly way to stay mobile and connected.

### Low-Fee Banking

Some banks offer no-cost or low-fee accounts for older adults. These accounts often include free transactions, no monthly fees, and other perks. Ask your bank what's available - you might be pleasantly surprised.

### Affordable Internet & Cell Plans

Staying connected is more important than ever. Programs like Connecting Families offer low-cost internet and phone plans for eligible households. Visit [connecting-families.ca](http://connecting-families.ca) to learn more.

### Dental Care Programs

Good oral health is part of overall health. The **Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program** provides free dental care for eligible low-income seniors. There's also the **Healthy Smiles Ontario** program for those under 18 in your care.

### Free Tax Clinics

Filing taxes can unlock benefits and credits you might not know you're eligible for. Free tax clinics are available across Durham to help you file for free.

### Housing Supports

There are programs to help you stay housed and secure such as **rent-geared-to-income housing** to **eviction prevention services**. Visit <https://www.durham.ca/en/living-here/housing.aspx> to learn more or apply.

### Final Thought

Living on a fixed income doesn't mean you have to do it alone. These programs are here to help

Everyone deserves to feel good.

**For information on these supports and more, visit: [durham.ca/living-with-low-income](http://durham.ca/living-with-low-income)**

**Call the Durham Health Connection Line:**

**Dial 311 (if you're within Durham Region)**

**or call 905-668-2020.**





# Tiny Ticks, Big Trouble: Your Guide to Lyme Prevention

So many of us love the outdoors! But did you know that enjoying activities such as camping, walking, and golfing outdoors in grassy or forested areas can expose you to ticks that carry tick-borne diseases such as Lyme Disease?

## What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium that is carried and spread by certain types of ticks. Ticks feed on animal blood to complete the various stages of their life cycle. In Ontario, only blacklegged (“deer”) ticks carry Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases in Ontario.

## When nature gets too close: How ticks latch on:

Blacklegged ticks are found throughout Durham Region. People come into contact with ticks when outdoors in places such as wooded areas or areas with leaf litter and tall grass. Ticks shelter in dead leaves and then climb to the tips of tall grasses and low bushes to wait to attach to animals as they brush past. Ticks usually feed on small rodents, birds and deer, but they will also attach themselves to people who are out walking, hunting, golfing, camping, fishing, etc.

**WARNING:** Anyone bitten by a blacklegged tick should visit their health care provider immediately or, if the tick was picked up in the last 72 hours, visit their local pharmacist to obtain a prophylactic dose of antibiotics for Lyme Disease.

## A tick has attached, what do I do?

- Using tweezers, grasp the tick’s head as close to the skin as possible
- Pull straight up slowly, making sure to remove the mouth parts from the skin
- Wash the bite with soap and water then disinfect it with alcohol or a household skin antiseptic
- Take a picture of the tick and submit it to [www.eticck.ca](http://www.eticck.ca) to see if it is a blacklegged tick

## Tick-proof your adventures: Simple steps to stay safe:

- Wear light-coloured clothing – ticks are more visible against light backgrounds
- Check people and pets after spending time outdoors in forested areas
- Stick to open trails in forests – avoid contact with shrubs, tall grasses and piles of dead leaves
- Wear long sleeved tops and long pants. For extra protection, tuck pants into socks
- Use a bug repellent containing DEET or Picaridin
- Maintain your property by keeping yards free of leaf litter, keeping grass short and removing clutter which can provide hiding places for rodents that carry ticks

For detailed information about Tick-borne disease and how to lower your risk of exposure to ticks, visit

[durham.ca/ticks](http://durham.ca/ticks)



# Don't get bitten!

## Your guide to West Nile Safety

Spring and summer are perfect for enjoying the outdoors – but they also bring some pesky visitors. Mosquitoes aren't just annoying, some carry West Nile Virus, which can seriously affect your health.

### What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus (WNV) is spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who get it experience mild symptoms like:

- Headache
- Fever
- Rash
- Swollen glands

But for some – especially older adults and young children- they can develop more serious symptoms such as:

- Severe headaches
- Stiff neck
- Confusion
- Swelling of the brain

### How to protect yourself:

Here are some tips to stay safe while still enjoying the fresh air:

- **Avoid peak mosquito hours:** Mosquitoes are most active from May to September, especially between dusk and dawn.
- **Cover up:** Wear long pants, long sleeves, shoes, and socks. Light-coloured clothing is best - mosquitoes love dark and bright colours.
- **Use bug spray:** Choose one with DEET or Picaridin and apply it to exposed skin or on your outer clothing.

- **Keep them out:** Use screens on windows and doors to prevent mosquitoes from sneaking inside.
- **Dump standing water:** Mosquitoes breed in still water. Empty buckets, birdbaths, and plant saucers every few days – especially after the rain.

### Want to Learn More?

For tips on choosing insect repellents, visit <http://www.canada.ca> and search for "DEET" or "Picaridin".

For more details about West Nile virus and how to protect yourself, visit

[durham.ca/westnilevirus](http://durham.ca/westnilevirus)

or call the Durham Region  
Health Department:

Dial 311  
(within Durham Region)

or call 905-668-2020;

Toll-Free:  
1-800-841-2729.



*Brain Teaser:*

Give your mind exercise

**What has keys but can't open doors?**

Answer: A piano!  
Now call a friend and  
try this riddle on them



# Safe Medication Use: Simple Tips to Stay on Track

## Do you regularly take medications (prescription or non-prescription)?

If **YES**, these tips can help you stay safe:

### Keep an Up-To-Date Medication List

- Include all prescription, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal supplements, cannabis, puffers, creams, and ointments.
- Share your list with your health care team and family members – especially for emergencies.

### Know Your Medications

- Ask your health care provider how to take it, store it, possible side effects and what symptoms you should report.

### Read Labels Carefully

- Double check the name and dose before taking any medication.
- Similar bottles and names can lead to dangerous mix-ups and side effects.

### Take Medications as Prescribed

- Follow your provider's instructions exactly.
- Skipping or changing doses can reduce effectiveness or cause harm to your health.

### Missed a Dose?

- Check the medication information sheet for "missed dose" instructions.
- When in doubt, call your pharmacist or healthcare provider.

### Store Medications Properly

- Keep them in a cool, dry place, away from stoves or sinks. Heat and moisture can damage them.
- Ask your pharmacist for storage tips.
- Keep them out of reach and out of sight of any children.

### Dispose of Expired Medications

- Medications that have expired are no less effective. Bring expired or unused medications to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

### Report Side Effects

- Some side effects can lead to a fall, for example if you are dizzy or feeling weak.
- Write down any side effects and notify your doctor.
- Some side effects may be normal but others may require a dose adjustment or medication change.

Have questions about your medications? Contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist. (Adapted from PHAC Keeping Track of Your Medicine)



# Home Safe Home: Your Fall Prevention Checklist

Your home should feel like a sanctuary - not a hazard. As we age, changes in balance, strength, and vision can make slips and falls more likely, but most can be prevented with a few simple updates. Think of these changes as empowering - not limiting. A safer home means more confidence to do the things you love.

## Inside Your Home

### Lighting

- Brighten hallways, staircases, and bathrooms. Motion-sensor night lights are a game-changer.

### Floors & Pathways

- Clear clutter from walkways - a clear path is a safe path.
- Use non-slip rugs and secure cords along walls. Scatter rugs? Scatter them out!

### Bathroom Support

- Install grab bars near the toilet and shower.
- Add non-slip mats or a bath chair for extra confidence.

### Stair Safety

- Railings on both sides of stairs for steady support.
- Add traction strips for extra grip.

## Daily Access

- Keep everyday items within easy reach - skip the risky climbs.

## Outside Your Home

### Lighting & Visibility

- Motion-activated or solar lights for entrances and walkways.

### Pathways & Steps

- Repair cracks and uneven surfaces.
- Add railings to steps and stoops for security.



## Outdoor Tidiness

- Store tools and garden hoses out of the way.
- Trim overgrown bushes for better visibility.

## Quick Reference: Safer Living Starts Here

- Lighting: Bright and even lighting prevents trips and falls.
- Floors & Pathways: Non-slip rugs, hidden cords, and open walkways keep things tidy and safer.
- Bathroom Support: Grab bars and bath chairs make getting in and out easier.
- Stair Safety: Railings and traction strips add confidence to every step.
- Daily Access: Place everyday items within easy reach to reduce stretching or bending.

## Extra Tips

- Wear supportive shoes indoors and outdoors - style meets safety.
- Never climb the top three rungs of a ladder - stay low, stay safe.
- Keep a clear path to the bathroom and use a night light for midnight trips.
- Take your time - slow and steady wins the safety race.

For more fall prevention tips, visit

[durham.ca/healthyaging](https://durham.ca/healthyaging)

**Tip: Even tackling one item a week can make your home safer without feeling overwhelming.**

# Make the right call

Need assistance, but not sure who to call?

Help is just three digits away.



**211** Non-emergency social and community services

**311** Regional government programs and services

**411** Local directory assistance

**511** Travel information such as road and traffic conditions

**711** Teletypewriter (TTY) Relay Services for the speech and hearing impaired

**811** Non-emergency health services

**911** Emergency services



DURHAM  
REGION  
HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT

Durham Health Connection Line  
905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729

**[durham.ca/healthyaging](https://durham.ca/healthyaging)**

**Dial 311** (within regional limits)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



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