

Winter Safety this Holiday Season

The holiday season is officially upon us! Families and friends are gathering to celebrate and enjoy this special time of year together. With all of the festivities, our “to do” lists are lengthy. If safety is not on this list, it should be - especially if you have an elderly family member visiting or staying with you. Here are some safety considerations to keep in mind this winter.

- **Plan ahead for guests who have limited mobility.** Think about how you can accommodate wheelchairs, walkers or canes with alternative entrance ways so your loved ones can be greeted effortlessly and comfortably. Also, have a designated space to store any mobility aids so your guests can enjoy the gathering without worry.

- **Keep lights bright and designate a family member to help guests move from room to room.** Low lighting, while festive, is not safe. Many seniors have trouble with their eyesight, and the twinkling lights of a Christmas tree may not be enough for them to navigate unfamiliar surroundings.

- **Stay healthy.** Before the holidays, all family members should be sure to get their flu shot to mitigate the spread of disease. If someone is ill during the holidays, frequent handwashing and avoiding close contact is a must.

- **Help prevent a fall by keeping stairs and entrance ways clear as well as treating icy sidewalks.** The CDC reports that 3 million people over the age of 65 are treated in the ER each year for fall-related injuries. Go through your home and limit clutter by removing unnecessary area rugs and extension cords, and rearrange furniture to create a clear path. If your guest is staying overnight, place inexpensive rubber soled mats in the bathrooms and showers and use night lights in the hallways. Clear walkways and use salt where needed, and make sure there are railings - or plan to support them as they enter your home.

After the holidays have passed, New Englanders look forward to a cold winter. Think ahead so you and your loved ones are able to safely navigate the slippery conditions throughout the season:

- Wear insulated footwear with good treads; avoid plastic soles.
- Take shorter, slower steps.
- When driving, plan ahead to give yourself sufficient time and map out your route.
- Use the railing when going up or down stairs.
- Walk on clear walkways and sidewalks. Do not take shortcuts over snowy areas.
- Keep your hands and arms free for balance or protection.
- Be careful getting in and out of vehicles.

The entire McLean community wishes you and your loved ones a happy and safe holiday season. For more tips on keeping your home safe and reducing the risk of falls this winter, please call McLean Outpatient Rehabilitation and Wellness at 860-658-3745 or visit McLeanCare.org.