

4.6 Community mobility and pedestrian safety (25 min)



Our guest speaker will complete this section — Community Safety Expert:

Invite a guest to lead a discussion on community and pedestrian safety, such as a community safety officer or crossing guard from your local police force. You may also use an occupational therapist, yourself or your peer leader, or past participants. The speaker should be up-to-date on current road rules and pedestrian issues specific to your community. The aim is to find a person with some expertise, familiarity, or interest in this area to demonstrate the major points in a variety of ways. These include the various situations, risks, and safety alternatives when “Stepping On” in the community.

In the next session, participants often speak about the things they’ve tried out and the changes they are introducing into their lives.

Encourage your guest to use a range of ways to illustrate the major points. These can include stories of their experiences, photographs, pictures, facts and figures, and gadgets (e.g., flashlights).

Sometimes it is helpful to prompt participants with questions. Here are some sample questions that the speaker or leader can use to facilitate discussion:

Say/Paraphrase:

- *How do you handle it when you need to cross the street?*
- *What are the most dangerous intersections in our community for pedestrians?*
- *What are some strategies for being safe in busy parking lots?*

Note: The speaker or participants may talk about local trouble spots. However, the focus needs to be directed back to what the individual can do to be safe, not on what the local government should be doing.

The risks

- As we grow older, we may not see all of the hazards. We need to be more observant.
- Our usual pace may be too rushed.
- Our pace may be slower than it used to be due to age or for a medical reason, or because of the medication we are taking.
- It may take longer to cross the road.



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- It may be more difficult to see in low-light conditions.
- We may not hear traffic, or traffic noise may be confusing.
- Crossing the road at a diagonal takes longer and we are less likely to be visible.
- Crossing the road in front of parked cars makes us less visible to drivers.
- Uneven sidewalks are a common problem.
- Slippery areas are a concern — slick surfaces, wet areas, snow or ice, and supermarket floors in particular.
- Curbs and ramps may be more difficult to negotiate.
- Traffic patterns may be confusing.

The strategies and some ways of illustrating them

- Don't ever hurry. Plan ahead so that it is not necessary to rush.
- If participants are concerned about being bumped and jostled in crowds:
 - Practice with the physical therapist in Session 6
 - Let the participants know that strengthening legs and improving balance through exercise will help
 - Use a shopping cart or walker when possible
 - Have your vision checked

Crossing streets and parking lots

- Never assume the driver has seen you when you're about to cross the road. Even if you can't see him or her clearly, look toward the driver. This gives a definite message that you want to cross, and the person should stop.
- Cross away from parked cars and other obstructions to the drivers' vision. Move to where you can be seen even if it means walking a bit more.
- Cross with other people if possible.
- Walk to the traffic lights. The exercise is good for you. The "don't walk" sign indicates that you should not leave the curb. When you've started crossing with the "walk" sign, don't rush. Continue crossing even if the sign turns to "don't walk" when you're in the middle.



- Avoid unprotected intersections if possible — for example, where a number of roads converge, or at circles. It is usually much safer to walk further down the street to cross than to try to cross where it is less easy to see or predict what drivers are going to do.
- If the workshop is held in an area that gets snow or ice in winter, be sure to talk about winter mobility safety, even if the workshop takes place during warmer months.
- Avoid walking over snow banks to cross the street and be aware of any ice on sidewalks or roads. Take small steps when you think there may be ice. Plant your feet using the whole foot and bend your knees a little. (Leaders should demonstrate this for the group.)

Weather and night

- When going out on dark or cloudy days, at dusk, or at night, or just so that you can be seen clearly at any time:
 - Wear light-colored clothing and carry a yellow or light-colored umbrella.** We tend to wear dark or basic colors that make it more difficult for drivers to see us. (To illustrate this, either use a picture, look outside and spot an older person in light-colored clothing, or look around the room and see who would pass the “being seen” test.)
 - Carry a flashlight at dusk and at night.** (Put a selection on display.)
 - Put reflective tape around your bag, cane, or arm.** This can be purchased from bicycle shops or home supply stores. Even if you don’t normally use a **cane** or **walking stick**, you may still want to use one at night for extra stability.
- Windy days are a concern. Take extra care or avoid going out on windy days.

Surfaces and paths

- If you need them, wear your glasses and hearing aids when outdoors.
- Carry a cane. Even if you normally don’t use a cane inside, a cane or walking stick can help with stability on outdoor surfaces and paths.



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- Look around and choose the path with the least number of hazards. (Instructors can use the area outside of the venue to illustrate this.) Which is the best way to go and what are your alternatives? The quickest route is not always the safest.
- Scan a few feet ahead when you walk. Don't look straight down or far away. Scanning ahead gives you time to adjust your steps and avoid a trip or slip hazard. (Refer to the physical therapist's presentation in Session 2.)
- Walk down curb ramps using a wider leg base for support.
- Where you encounter curbs, pick a spot where there is a pole, street sign, or car to hold for support.

Strategies to increase personal safety

- Hold your bag safely over your shoulder, close to your body, and with an arm over it. If the bag has a long strap, hang it diagonally with the strap across your chest. Put your wallet in the front pocket for greater security. (Remind participants of the **Strategies to Increase Personal Safety** handout on the display table.)

4.7 Homework (3 min)



HANDOUT • Exercise Log

End with the homework suggestions:

Do a shoe audit at home or, if buying a new pair of shoes, try to apply the safety features to the choice.



- Apply something you learned from the community mobility talk that you want to try on your own. For example, you might want to wear light-colored clothing when you go out.

Plans for the following week:

- Tell participants about next week's session: **bone health, medication management, and sleeping better**. Ask participants to bring in any supplements they take that contain vitamin D. These could be multivitamins, a calcium/vitamin D combination, or a vitamin D supplement. In this session, they will learn to figure out how much vitamin D they are taking compared to what is recommended.

