

Agenda and Objectives

1. Welcome & outline — review today's agenda
2. Review the homework
3. Reflections of a former participant on barriers & achievements
4. Hip protectors
5. Navigating in inclement weather
6. Exercises

BREAK

7. Getting out and about
8. Homework

The main objectives of this session are:

1. To keep advancing the exercises and make them a part of my daily routine.
2. To hear what a former participant learned from the program and how the person used it in daily life.
3. To understand how hip protectors can protect against hip fracture.
4. To learn how different weather conditions could lead to a fall and learn ideas that would help with moving around outdoors.
5. To practice moving around in the community in a safe and supportive way.



Session 6

- Wear bright-colored clothing so that you can be seen easily.
- Use care when walking on wet leaves, which can be very slippery. Avoid falls by wearing shoes or boots with slip-resistant soles.
- Don't let a hat or scarf block your vision. Watch out for large rocks, low branches, tree stumps, and uneven surfaces.
- Be aware of windy conditions. Some people may get more support by holding on to another person or bringing their cane or walker along. Others may choose not to go out on particularly windy days.

When discussing stories and facilitating a discussion of ways to reduce the risk of falling in inclement weather conditions, pass around items from the display table that may be pertinent in reinforcing learning (examples: Yaktrax®, ice tip). Also refer participants to the **Yaktrax® Walkers for Snowy and Icy Conditions** and **Winter Mobility Tips** hand-outs. Find local merchants that sell Yaktrax (or equivalent products) and provide this information to the group.

6.6 Exercises (15 min)



Our Guest Speaker will complete this section — Physical Therapist:

The main goals for this section are for the therapist to emphasize why these exercises are important, how they prevent falls, and the importance of participants challenging themselves to keep making improvements. When practicing the exercises, the therapist should be able to spend a lot of time on the advanced levels, as most participants should have advanced by this time.

- Ask for questions and remind them this will be the last time you will see them.
- **Practice the exercises. Concentrate on the exercises that people have questions about or with which they are having difficulty.**

It is important to:



- **Say/Paraphrase:** *Which exercises would you like us to go over today? Which ones have you advanced? This will be your last chance to have me watch you do the exercise and give you some ideas.*
- Discuss advancing the balance exercises and how to do it. It is important to point out the connection between the exercises and falls prevention and improvement in function. Use real-life examples.



- Ask how the weights are going and increase if needed. Explain the need to increase weights.
Ask participants why they think it is important always to keep the exercises challenging.
Make sure you practice some exercises. If there are no requests, choose some that you think are more challenging or that people often have questions about.



Announce a 15-minute break. Put out the beverages and snacks and make sure there is an opportunity for the physical therapist to work with participants who have questions or need additional assistance. Also encourage people to look at the display table items.

6.7 Getting out and about (45 min)



- The purpose of this segment is to provide an opportunity for participants to put what they have learned into practice and gain mastery of some of their personal mobility goals. It provides a supported environment for practicing these goals, with assistance as needed, and instruction on technique.
- For safety reasons, the leader may need to recruit extra helpers to assist in this activity. One leader, the physical therapist, and a helper can accompany three to four participants outside, providing close supervision, coaching, and support.
- While the other participants are waiting to do this activity, the peer leader will show a DVD and facilitate a discussion about community safety strategies. The Stepping On Program's DVD B — Community Safety, that is provided with the training has 5 community mobility stories (segments 1-5) from which to choose. There is a discussion guide that accompanies the DVD; a copy follows the Background Information in this session.
- The participants usually have a range of mobility needs, including those people who are more active. Think about this when you divide up into smaller groups. Divide the groups up — perhaps one group composed of people who are frail or use walkers and another composed of those who are more active.
- Because the Getting Out and About activity builds on information learned throughout the program, try to conduct this activity during Session 6. If the physical therapist isn't available for this session, you can shift the activity to another session when this expert is available, but no earlier than Session 5.



Participant Testimonial

Meg uses a walker if she is walking outside for any distance. She has a spinal curvature, was very weak at the beginning of the program, and revealed that she was skeptical of the program and the exercises. Meg is a retired physical therapist and found it difficult to be the recipient of a health program. After the 7-week program, however, she realized some of the benefits and accepted the idea that the program could help. This is a common experience with many participants in the Stepping On Program. Meg found that Session 6 was particularly useful for trying out curbs and inclines with someone who could provide feedback and support.

This session requires quite a bit of planning. Having extra helpers to partner with the participants maximizes the opportunity to discuss the issues as the activity is performed. It is helpful to invite the physical therapist to arrive just before the break to answer any questions about the exercises, lead the exercise session, and stay for the mobility mastery session. This person's expertise and input is invaluable.

Be creative when you look for the most suitable venue. Think about what it offers and to what extent it has the characteristics your particular group needs. It may be as close as just outside your venue or a short distance down the road. If a local park or shopping center seems to be the best option, you will need an extended session.

Example 1: Participants decide through discussion, and the mobility goal setting from Session 2 indicates, that they are most worried about:

1. Uneven footpaths
2. Uneven ground
3. Hurrying and not paying attention
4. Steps and stairs
5. Standing up and feeling dizzy

You might find a nearby park that has steps with and without handrails, grass, ramps, uneven ground, and a variety of different gradients, gutters, and steps. People may feel most anxious on the downhill slopes or decide they will continue avoiding such slopes.



Example 2: Participants decide through discussion, and the mobility goal setting from Session 2 indicates, that they are most worried about:

1. Walking up a slope
2. Walking outside
3. Shopping

You might find a local shopping complex that presents mobility challenges. People may find uneven ramps, crowds, and their own poor eyesight difficult to cope with. Some may want to use shopping carts to create space around them if they need some distance from other people.

The format of the Getting Out and About session:

- Before setting out, gather together those people who will be the first to go out, explain the intended aims, and check any special requests from the participants' Session 2 handout **Getting Out and About – Goal Setting**. Explain that the participants are going to practice some of the things they've learned, such as scanning ahead and going up steps (choose the most appropriate items from the practice list below).

Say/Paraphrase: *This is a chance to practice doing things in a safe way but also to see how we normally handle ourselves when we go out. It's a way of connecting theory and practice. The expedition helps us see how to apply some of what we've learned in different circumstances.*

Explain where they are going and the opportunities provided by the venue.

For example: "As we leave the building, there are steps with a handrail and a ramp."

- Staff should "buddy up" with one or several participants. As you walk along with them, talk about what they are practicing — encouraging them to share things from the program that they have tried out and prompting safe techniques, if necessary. This section brings together strategies taught in all of the previous sessions, including the community mobility and vision segments. Try to include a planning exercise: "If we need to cross the road, where is the safest place, and what is the best way to do this?"



- If participants do not seem to be concentrating on anything in particular, or if they finish what they want to try, provide a prompt to facilitate further observations and help them think about what they need to do. It is best to respond to what participants need, rather than attempt to cover everything. Some example prompts: Do they think they are wearing safe shoes for this sort of situation? Are they climbing with the stronger leg going first? What strategies work for both indoors and outdoors? How do they feel about going out to shop and how do they actually do their shopping? Has anyone noticed the timing of the lights and feel they are more confident crossing the street at the lights at a certain point in the cycle?
- Refer questions to the physical therapist for clarification. The PT can rotate to different people as needed (e.g., for steps and curbs) and as questions arise.
- **Practice List:** Practice as many of the requests as you can. If there are not enough requests, offer some ideas for practice. **The important thing is to get people actually to practice different movements! Don't just discuss how to move!** Keep these talking points handy so you can have a purposeful discussion with participants during this activity. Copy and enlarge this list and provide copies to the extra helpers.
- General ideas to use in many settings:
 - Heel-toe walking. “Why is it important to pick up your toes? Is this also important indoors?”
 - Scanning ahead when walking. Being prepared for hazards so as to allow time to adjust their steps to avoid the hazard. “Have you tried this and, if so, how did you do it? How far ahead do you scan? What works best? Why do we scan ahead? Is it also good to scan ahead indoors?”
- Items to practice from the Session 2 handout **Getting Out and About – Goal Setting** include the following (discuss these skills as people practice them):

Crossing a road

Planning the safest and best way to cross the road. “What do you look for and what do you try to avoid?”

“Eyeballing” the drivers before crossing the road

Don't rush

Crossing with the light



Using the cross walk
 Crossing with a group of people
 Remembering not to cross between parked cars
 Going out when it is not rush hour
 Wearing your hearing aid to hear car horns
 Climbing a curb

- ♦ Planning the best spot to use. “Is there a pole to hold onto?”
 “What else could you use?” (For example, a walking stick or the arm of a friend)
- ♦ “Which foot goes up first? Which foot goes down first?”

Walking up a slope

Walk with feet farther apart
 Take smaller steps
 Use a cane or walking stick
 Ramps — use handrails

Different surfaces

Scanning ahead
 Walking from carpeting to linoleum, hardwood floors, or tile.
 “How do you clear the thresholds?” “How do you change your step?”
 Slippery surfaces: feet wider apart, smaller steps, use of a cane, walking stick, or traction on shoes or boots. Planning to avoid slippery surfaces, like wet spills or ice
 Grass can be slippery, especially if wet; it can hide uneven spots or holes; it can be high and catch your toes
 Uneven ground or sidewalks — importance of heel-toe, adjusting steps, use of a walking stick or cane
 If you are unable to practice outdoors, you can use doormats with different surfaces — for example, a mat with high bristles

Walking outside

Scanning ahead
 Adjusting to different surfaces
 Shoes for outdoors



Shopping

Using a shopping cart in the store to help with balance

Parking near the shopping cart corral so you can use a cart for walking into and out of the store

Using the drive-up lane so that store personnel can load your groceries into your car for you; then they can take the empty cart back to the cart corral

Planning to go shopping when the store is not as busy

Carrying packages — use a backpack, over-the-shoulder bag, or small personal cart for your items to carry them from the car to your home

Catching a bus, train, or taxi

Plan ahead, don't rush

Walking in crowds — scanning ahead

Walking around the house

Heel-toe walking

Scanning ahead

Walking around the garden

Different surfaces

Slopes

Stepping over objects

Using walking sticks outside

Which hand?

How high?

When to touch it to the ground

Make sure to swing it through and not drag it

Using a cane

Which hand?

How high?

When to touch it to the ground

Make sure to swing it through



Getting in/out of a vehicle

Using the dashboard, car seat, or assist handle above the doorframe for hand support

Using tips from Session 2, section 2.8, “Getting up from a chair” and “Sitting down safely”

Steps

Which leg down/up first?

One step at a time if need be

Use of handrails

Marking the edges of steps with brightly colored tape

Using elevators, when available, instead of stairs

Vision

Does anyone wear bifocals or multifocals? What kinds of difficulties do you encounter? How do you get around these? Do you take off your glasses when negotiating steps or have you learned to adjust your head position to see?

Light conditions

Sunglasses — refer to the vision presentation in Session 4.

Ask: How do sunglasses help? Discuss glare

Planning ahead when you leave home

Leave the outside lights on or use motion lights

Carry a flashlight

Park under a street light

When going into different lighting (for example, light to dark) — stop until eyes adjust. Use a cane or walking aid

Wear “white at night” so drivers can see you

Snow or ice

Scanning ahead for ice

Wearing shoes or boots with more tread

Wearing Yaktrax®

Walking slower with smaller steps



Session 6

Planning medications for when you are out

For example, medications that make you rush to the bathroom or make you sleepy

Alcohol

Keep the number of alcoholic drinks to one or none. (Discuss the effects of alcohol on balance)

What else?

Wear your hearing aids so you won't be startled by someone coming up from behind you

Talk about managing on windy days; for some, it might be best to avoid walking outside on windy days



- Raise awareness of community services — for example, the community bus. Give people more choices and be an advocate for community services and a facilitator of networking.
- Review as a group what they have achieved and if they have met any of their personal goals. What strategies did people try, e.g., defensive walking and scanning ahead? Refer participants to the **Keeping Safe Outdoors** handout on the display table.

6.8 Homework (5 min)

Say/Paraphrase: *Is there anything you would like to revisit next week in our final session?*

- Pass out the **Exercise Log** handout.
- Give a brief description of next week's agenda: **Reviewing and Planning Ahead**.



Keeping Safe Outdoors

Remember!

On the Stairs or Curb:

1. Step *up* first with your stronger leg.
2. Step *down* first with your weaker leg.
3. Walk with your legs wider apart to make ramps and slopes easier.
4. On stairs, fold your walker and use the railing. If possible, have someone else carry your walker for you.

Cane Safety

General principles for using a cane safely:

1. Cane height. Your cane should be adjusted for your height.
2. Use your cane in the hand opposite to your affected or weaker leg.
3. Replace the rubber tip when it is worn.
4. Consider getting a retractable ice tip for your cane for use in winter.

Walker Safety

General principles for using a walker safely:

1. Walker height. Your walker should be adjusted for your height.
2. Don't let the walker get too far in front of you when you are walking. You should maintain an upright posture and step into the center of the walker.
3. Replace the rubber tips, glides, or tennis balls on the back legs when worn. If your walker has wheels, these also should be renewed when worn.

