

Watch Your Step While Hiking

Slips, trips and falls are a common cause of recreational and work-related injuries. Common sense prevails when in motion. Being aware of surroundings and potential trip hazards helps prevent accidents.

When hiking, the risk of injury depends on several factors. These include the terrain, changes in elevation, the hiker's experience, fitness level and awareness of surroundings, footwear and weather conditions (e.g., hot, cold, stormy). Wearing a backpack or hand-carrying equipment can affect balance and stability and cause fatigue.

Prevention Tips

Even the most fit and experienced hikers can lose their footing. Here are some prevention tips:

1. Wear footwear with good traction and ankle support and a cushioned pair of socks. Change socks if they get wet to avoid getting blisters.
2. If you wear a backpack, adjust the straps to ensure a comfortable fit when it is full. Balance the load. Try not to carry more than you can handle.
3. Warm-up and stretch before hiking and other physical activities. Stay physically fit and flexible to reduce injury severity should you slip or fall.
4. Watch for uneven, wet, slick, icy or snowed-covered surfaces. Take your time if they can't be safely skirted. Some surfaces do not appear to be unsafe until it's too late.
5. Consider using hiking with poles to assist with balance, especially when climbing or descending steep, loose or uneven surfaces.
6. Study your route beforehand. Stay on marked trails; don't bushwhack or take shortcuts. Carry a map. A mobile phone may not get a signal.
7. Check the weather. Avoid hiking when there might be a lightning storm and during the hottest times of day when there is a higher risk of heat illness.
8. Drink plenty of water and eat nutritious snacks to keep your energy level up; take short rest breaks to reduce fatigue.
9. Carry a flashlight, a mini-first aid kit and something to keep yourself warm in case of an injury. Stay put if you get lost.
10. Always let someone know where you are headed before you depart for a hike and when you expect to get back in case you get injured.



Did You Know?

Muscle strains and sprains are often caused by slips and falls that occur while carrying loads that affect balance or block the ability to see the ground.

