Stay On Your Feet...

Step 2: Walk Tall

Always walk with your body upright and straight. Over time, you may walk differently due to hip, back, spinal degeneration or lack of physical activity.

Changes to your walk can be caused by many things:

- Loss of leg strength can lead to shuffling or cause you to walk with your feet closer together or further apart than they should be.
- Poor hip flexibility and reduced shoulder mobility may cause you to take shorter steps.
- Loss of strength in the upper body and back can make you lean forward in order to balance yourself.

How to walk tall

- Becoming more active can help you return to being straight and upright.
- A walking aid may help. Talk to your health care provider, physiotherapist or occupational therapist about what would work best for you. Call your local Community Care Access Centre to see if you qualify for a physiotherapy or occupational therapy assessment.

If you use a walking aid

- Make sure it was designed and fitted just for you, and you are using it correctly. If it is the wrong length, it may not be helping you and can actually cause other problems. If a cane is used on the wrong side, it can impair your balance.
- If you get second hand equipment, make sure you get it assessed, so that it is the right height for you.
- Keep it clean and in good working order, especially if it has rubber tips, wheels or brakes.
- Organize your home so you can get around safely with your walking aid. You may need to rearrange some furniture or de-clutter.

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What can I do to walk tall?

Review your current activities and complete the table below. An example is given to help.

What positive steps am I already taking?	What changes might help me stay on my feet?	How will I make these changes? Is there anyone I need to contact?	When will I make these changes?
I walk quite a bit, but not as regularly as before.	I will see if there is pole walking in my community. I will try yoga, pilates or tai chi to help support my spine.	Dave next door does early morning walks. I can call him to see if I can join him. I will check with my local public health unit and community centre to see what local classes are available.	I will call Dave tomorrow and see if I can join him. I will call my local public health unit and community centre tomorrow.

Who else do you know who would benefit from this information?

Stay Active, Stay Independent and Stay On Your Feet!

For more information about risk factors for falls or local falls prevention programs, contact your local health unit.
www.stayonyourfeet.ca

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