

## Safety Tips

# Step Up to Safety and Prevent Slips, Trips and Falls



Slips, trips and falls cause numerous injuries every day, accounting for 15 percent of all reported disabling injuries nationally. However, they are among the easiest hazards to correct. Be aware of your surroundings, concentrate and focus to help prevent a slip, trip or fall and stay on your feet.

**The following safety tips will help you avoid slips, trips and falls at work:**

### **Don't be in a hurry**

People who are in a hurry don't pay attention to where they are walking or what they are doing. They often take potentially dangerous shortcuts which may be unstable, shaky or slippery. Learn to slow down and avoid distractions. Inattention can lead to accidents.

### **Adjust and shorten your stride**

Walk at a pace that is suitable for the walking surface and the tasks you are doing. Do not walk too quickly, run or make rapid changes in direction. Make wide turns at corners.

### **Practice Walking Safely**

Plan your walking route to avoid slippery areas inside and out. Make sure your path is clear. Use handrails where provided, and pay attention to any floor markings. Do not carry items that obstruct your vision or are too high for you to see over. If you cannot avoid walking on slippery or wet surfaces, practice walking safely across them. Don't try to run, jump or slide across these slick surfaces. Instead, take slow, short steps with your toes pointed slightly outward. For additional balance, keep your hands at your sides (not in your pockets) to support you if you begin to fall.

### **Stair Safety**

Because it is very easy to lose your footing while climbing stairs, walk up and down stairs slowly. Never run up or down stairs, and avoid skipping steps. If you have to carry a load while climbing stairs, carry the load so it doesn't block your vision, and keep one hand free, if possible, to hold onto the handrail.

### **Don't stand on chairs, desks etc.**

Climbing or reaching for high places increases your chance of a fall. Call a custodian. Use a sturdy step stool or step ladder when these tasks are necessary.

### **Keep your work area clean and clear**

Eliminate clutter and obstructions. Good house-keeping is essential. Do not store items on the floor that might be tripped on. Never leave file cabinet drawers open. Secure electrical cords and wires under desks and away from walkways. Alert co-workers to hazards they are creating.

### **Report hazards to your supervisor**

Report any floor surfaces with loose finishes, holes, cracks, or worn or torn rugs and mats that may need to be repaired or replaced. Report areas with insufficient or non-working lighting so that lights are replaced, repaired or cleaned.

### **Alert custodial staff**

Don't assume someone else has already reported spills, wet floors and loose debris. Report it so caution signs can be placed and corrective actions taken.

## Choose appropriate footwear

Footwear often plays an important role in the occurrence of slips, trips and falls. In an educational setting you need to dress for both comfort and safety, but footwear is an important item that is often overlooked. Wearing the right shoes is of utmost importance. Open shoes, high heels, sandals or thongs are generally not recommended as footwear in a school setting. Shoes should be sturdy with slip-resistant soles and low heels. On wet days, wear non-slip rubber- or neoprene-soled shoes, but be aware that no one type of non-slip footwear can prevent the wearer from slipping on every surface type.

### In selecting shoes for work, use these tips from the American Podiatric Medical Association:

- Since foot size and shape can change over time, find an experienced shoe fitter to measure you each time you go to buy shoes. Have your feet measured while you're standing.
- Try shoes on both feet. Many people have one foot larger than the other. Buy shoes to fit the bigger foot.
- Shop for shoes in the afternoon. Your feet tend to swell during the day, and it's best to buy shoes when your feet are their normal size.
- Remember, new shoes should be comfortable right away, a "break-in" period should not be necessary.
- Footwear should be long enough, wide enough, and deep enough to wear without rubbing or constricting any part of your feet.
- Sturdy, cushioned shoes with leather or canvas uppers are recommended. They should be comfortable enough to let the toes wiggle, but not loose enough to cause the foot to slide and rub along the sides.
- Stay away from shoes with pointy toes or high heels as they cause added pressure to shift to your toes. Flat shoes with a low, wide-based heel are recommended.

- Recognize the signs of ill-fitting shoes. For example, corns and calluses are caused by friction from skin rubbing against bony areas of the feet, usually caused by shoes that don't fit properly.
- Inspect footwear regularly. When they wear out, dispose of them and purchase new ones. Excessive wearing of the outer sole, loss of shoe counter support, or wearing out in the midsole indicate it's time to replace the shoe. Replace laces that are worn out or too long. Tie all shoe laces tightly.

#### DISCLAIMER:

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**For more information call the  
Safety Hotline 396-2400.**