

Stay safe on your feet in winter

Nothing can prevent every slip or fall, but wearing the proper footwear can be the most important thing you do to stay safe when walking outside during cold weather.

Boots with rubber soles and non-slip treads are best. Traction aids are another excellent idea. However, not all footwear is suitable in all cold-weather conditions.

Comfort is also an essential factor. Your feet are farther from your heart than any other part of your body, so when it's cold out, it's very hard to keep them comfortably warm.

Whether for work, recreation or everyday use, the purpose of your footwear is a key consideration when deciding what you need.

Rubber soles are great for blocking moisture out, but they also trap moisture in. The best way to deal with this is to wear moisture-wicking sock liners against your feet, with a pair of thicker wool or synthetic socks over the liners. Never wear cotton socks with cold-weather boots.

Snow boots and winter boots might seem very similar, but there are several features that set them apart.

Snow boots are usually heavier than winter boots. They are designed for people who are going to be spending considerable time in snow or other wet and muddy winter weather conditions.

Winter boots are designed mostly with the idea of warmth in mind, although



some might offer other advantages usually found in snow boots. Snow boots are also waterproof or highly water-resistant.

While winter boots might be more fashionable than many snow boots, they are designed more for general use, and usually will not provide the protection of a good snow boot.

Many snow boot manufacturers provide temperature ratings for their products and specify whether or not they're for heavy cold weather activity.

Although snow boots offer better support and grip than regular winter boots, they aren't recommended if you will be hiking or trekking long distances. snow boots tend to have rigid soles and are higher in the leg than walking boots, so offer less flexibility on rougher terrain. Winter walking boots, which are often waterproof with insulated linings, would

be more suitable.

Winter work boots are similar, but are almost always constructed of thick leather for durability, and may come with a steel toe. Buy the steel-toed version only if it's really necessary, as this feature can make your toes uncomfortably cold. Expect a lugged, heavy-duty outsole and a shock-absorbing midsole.

Traction aids — ice grippers, cleats and the like — can help you walk on hard-packed snow and ice, but they can become dangerous and must be removed before walking on smooth surfaces such as stone, tile and ceramic.

Designs and styles vary greatly. The range includes overshoes, stretch devices, half devices and strap devices, among others. The less material used, the less it costs to manufacture.

Sometimes the less material used makes the item easier to put on or remove, but if the device does not provide full-sole traction (heel and toe), it isn't giving you as much protection as it could.

When selecting traction aid, remember that you could be at increased risk for slips and falls if any portion of the footwear sole doesn't have part of the traction aid covering it or if either the heel or the front of the foot is the primary (or only) source of traction.