

# Accidents Do Happen

*Especially in a Canadian winter* GIANCARLO LA GIORGIA

Winter is a wonderful time of year — unless you're among the thousands of Canadians who will throw out their backs shovelling snow, fracture their hips falling on icy walkways, break their legs skiing or find some ingenious way to hurt themselves indoors on the job. Scan this statistical sketch of accidental injuries, and plan to be careful.

**COLD SNAP** One study found that a 10-degree drop in outdoor temperature translated into a 38% increased risk of a recurrent heart attack. Both strenuous exercise and cold weather independently increase blood pressure, push up the heart rate and increase blood concentrations of fibrinogen, a protein involved in blood clotting.

## GOOD NEWS FOR KIDS

Fewer than 6% of hospital admissions for injuries due to falls from playground equipment occur in winter. This may be because children spend less time outdoors in winter or because they use the equipment more cautiously.

## DANGEROUS SLEDS

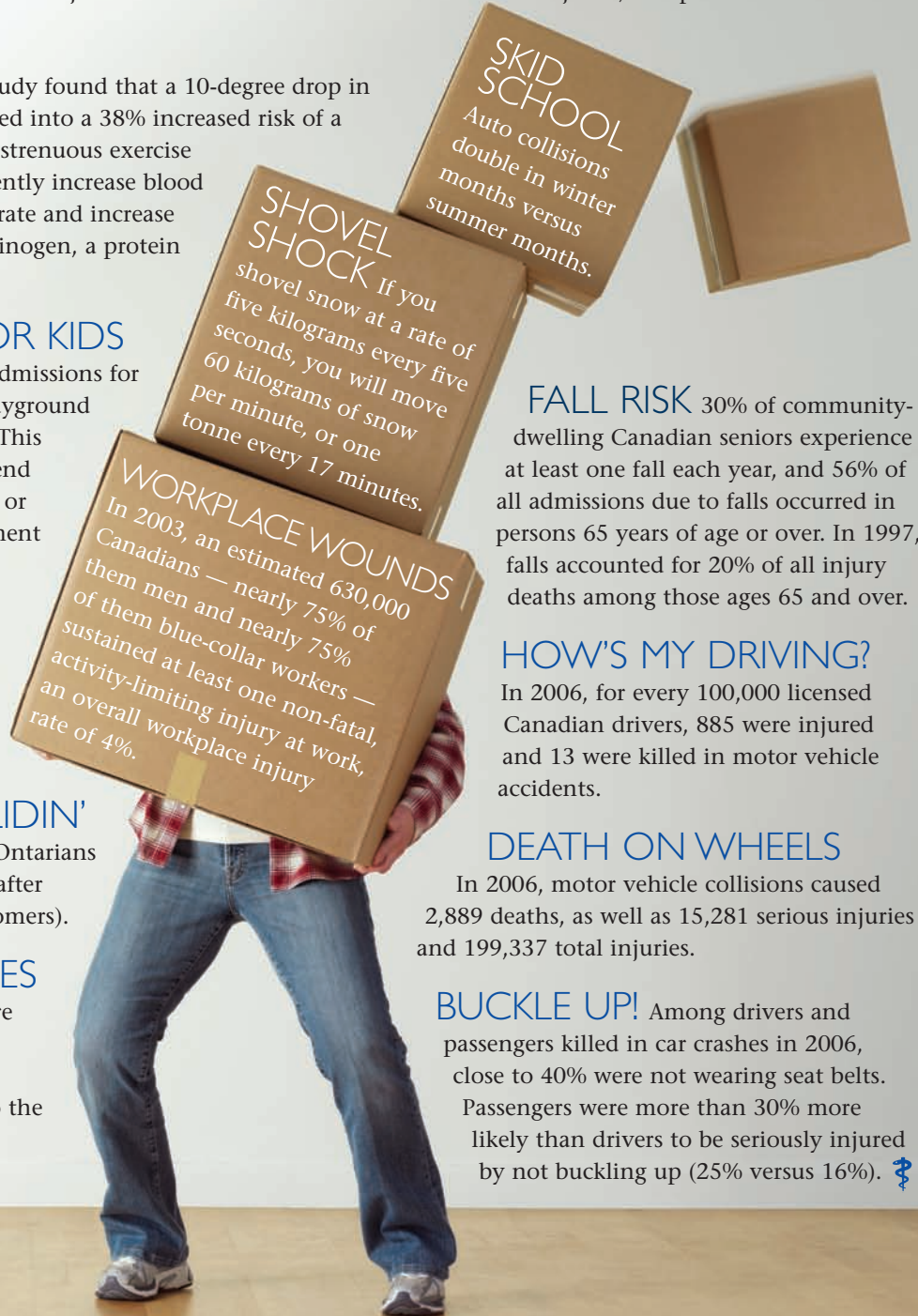
In 2003–04, snowmobiling accounted for 41% of all winter sports-related accidents.

## SLIPPIN' AND ASLIDIN'

In 2002–03, almost 12,000 Ontarians visited an emergency room after falling on ice (30% were boomers).

## FALLING EXPENSES

The annual direct health-care cost of injuries due to falls is \$2.4 billion, 41% (about \$1 billion) of which goes to the care of fall-injured seniors.



**FALL RISK** 30% of community-dwelling Canadian seniors experience at least one fall each year, and 56% of all admissions due to falls occurred in persons 65 years of age or over. In 1997, falls accounted for 20% of all injury deaths among those ages 65 and over.

## HOW'S MY DRIVING?

In 2006, for every 100,000 licensed Canadian drivers, 885 were injured and 13 were killed in motor vehicle accidents.

## DEATH ON WHEELS

In 2006, motor vehicle collisions caused 2,889 deaths, as well as 15,281 serious injuries and 199,337 total injuries.

**BUCKLE UP!** Among drivers and passengers killed in car crashes in 2006, close to 40% were not wearing seat belts. Passengers were more than 30% more likely than drivers to be seriously injured by not buckling up (25% versus 16%). 