

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

Winter Safety – Indoor & Outdoor

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is *hypothermia*, or abnormally low body temperature. A body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous because a person may not know it is happening and will not be able to do anything about it.

To prevent hypothermia—

- Keep the **house temperature** no lower than 65° F (at 70° F if the person is ill).
- Have him wear **warm clothes**, and place leg warmers on his arms and legs for extra warmth. Use **warm blankets** when the person is in bed.
- Wear a **warm hat** outside or a knit hat indoors to keep the body from losing heat.
- Provide a balanced **diet**.
- **Keep moving** by walking around the house or down an apartment hallway, lifting and stretching legs and arms.

Be aware that people with dementia may not dress appropriately for the weather or understand the risk of cold weather.

Signs of Hypothermia

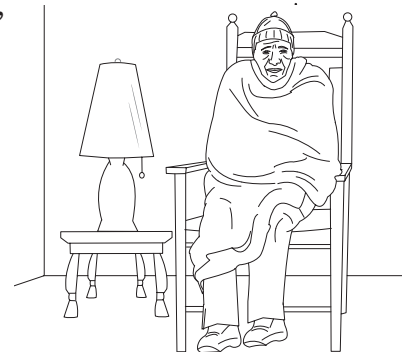
Signs include impaired judgment, shivering, cold pale skin, slow breathing and pulse, slurred or mumbled speech, weakness, drowsiness, loss of coordination, fumbling hands, stumbling steps, confusion and memory loss.

Fifty percent of hypothermia deaths

occur in persons over the age of 75. Even mild cold can cause hypothermia in the elderly because of compromised circulation or respiratory conditions.

If these signs are present:

- Wrap the person in blankets, notify the doctor, give warm fluids, and increase room temperature.
- Avoid rubbing the person's skin.
- Do not re-warm the person rapidly. Use a heater on low or warm hot water bottles (wrapped in a towel) on the chest and abdomen.
- Do not give the person alcohol or caffeine. Be alert to signs of heart attack. (Chest pain, shortness of breath, discomfort in the jaw, bluish pale skin, sweating and nausea. Call 911 immediately if hypothermia or heart attack symptoms are present.)



Source: CDC; www.livestrong.com; American Geriatrics Society

Winter Safety Tips

- ✓ Check your **furnace** filter each month and change when necessary. Have it serviced every year.
- ✓ If you use gas, wood, or kerosene heaters, make sure gases are vented to the outside.
- ✓ Keep **space heaters** away from any flammable objects, do not keep them on carpets or flammable surfaces, or near water. Check the cord for fraying. Don't use extension cords or run electrical cords under carpets.
- ✓ Don't use the kitchen stove to heat the home—it is dangerous.
- ✓ Remove dust from radiators each month, and keep furniture and drapes away from radiators.
- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat to make the home more energy efficient.
- ✓ Insulate water pipes to avoid freezing and bursting.
- ✓ Take advantage of local heating assistance funds and utility no-cutoff programs.



Prepare for Winter Emergencies

- ✓ Identify temporary living arrangements in case you are unable to stay in your own home and have a plan for getting there.
- ✓ Keep in touch with family and friends.
- ✓ Plan for your medical needs. Have extra medications on hand or identify a pharmacy that will deliver them to you.
- ✓ Have canned food, a can opener and one gallon of water per person per day.
- ✓ Keep batteries and battery powered flashlights available and, when needed, use flashlights instead of candles.
- ✓ If you have medical equipment, be sure you know how to maintain it or move it in an emergency.
- ✓ Share emergency contact information ahead of time with everyone who would need it.

For a free brochure on *Winter Warmth and Safety: Home Energy Tips for Older Adults*, call the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 or download it at www.eldercare.gov

Carbon Monoxide Detectors and Smoke Alarms

A leaky gas stove can give off dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Install a carbon monoxide detector and check the smoke alarm batteries. They can save a life.

Taking Care of Yourself—The Season for Dry Skin

Dry skin is more common as we age because of age-related thinning of the skin; moreover, dry skin can become easily infected and dry throats can more easily be susceptible to colds and flu. Since it is easier to prevent dry skin than it is to cure it, follow these tips and feel smooth, soft and comfortable.

- Take only short, lukewarm showers and baths. Hot water washes away our natural oils.
- Use soaps with moisturizers. Use moisturizers often during the day.
- Wear gloves when washing dishes and cleaning.
- Use lipstick or lip balm on your lips.
- Drink plenty of fluids—especially water—which won't add calories or caffeine.
- Use a humidifier in the winter or keep bowls of water near the heating vents.



Tip

Remember that heavy snow muffles the normal sounds you expect to hear that alert you to oncoming vehicles.

Inspiration

When you're through changing, you're through.

~Martha Stewart

Live Life Laughing!

To me, the Holidays are a very important time of the year. It's my stomach's busy season.



Don't Fall—Be Safe

Arrange to have leaves, snow, and ice removed from stairs and walkways. Use salt or sand throughout the winter months.

If you use a cane, replace the rubber tip before it is worn smooth. You can buy at a medical supply store an ice pick-like attachment that fits onto the end of the cane to help keep you from slipping when you walk.

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Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS—Winter Driving

- Listen for National Weather Service radio or television travel advisories.
- Do not travel in low visibility conditions.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads, overpasses, and bridges if at all possible.
- Winterize your car by checking antifreeze levels, tire tread and pressure, and windshield wipers.
- If you must travel by car, fill your gas tank, use tire chains and take a mobile phone with you.
- Let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive. Ask them to notify authorities if you are late.
- Check and re-stock the winter emergency supplies in your car before you leave.
- Never pour hot water on your windshield to remove ice or snow; it may shatter.
- Don't rely only on your car to provide sufficient heat; the car may break down.



Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Winter can be a beautiful time of year, however, a winter wonderland can be hazardous for seniors. Knowing the precautions to take and the symptoms of trouble can help you and the person in your care enjoy the coming season. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Hypothermia is the word to describe abnormally low body temperature.
T F
2. Signs include impaired judgment, shivering, cold pale skin, and slow breathing.
T F
3. A body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well.
T F
4. A drink of alcohol helps warm the body.
T F
5. Snow shoveling may raise the risk of heart attack.
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6. The kitchen stove is a good and safe way to heat the house.
T F
7. If you have medical equipment, it is important to know how to maintain it or move it in an emergency.
T F
8. Wearing a hat indoors will help keep the body from losing heat.
T F
9. We should avoid rubbing the person's skin if you suspect the person in your care has hypothermia.
T F
10. The house temperature should be kept at no lower than 65° F (at 70° F if the person is ill).
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____