



June 2017 Aging Gracefully, Volume 6

**Weather Concerns & Tips for Seniors**

When the weather temperatures rise or drop, it can play havoc on just about any situation. We all may suffer during these times but, extra care is needed for the elderly, people with a disability, and those with chronic medical conditions. As the body ages, it becomes less efficient at regulating its own temperature. The body gradually loses the ability to perspire and regulate itself in hot weather and cold weather; the body loses heat faster than when younger. The skin thins and offers less protection from the sun and elements. Other factors to take into consideration are medical conditions, a person's cognitive ability and medication. Some possible medical conditions that may be factors include, but are not limited to heart and lung diseases, poor circulation and high blood pressure. A person with a cognitive impairment may not be able to communicate when they are too hot or too cold due to their brain's inability to process the information and regulate the body's response. Some medications can decrease the body's responsiveness in regulating body temperature or may not be safe when in the sun and extra precaution is needed. It is important to talk to the pharmacist regarding all medication side effects. As always, talk with the physicians about concerns and keep them informed.

**Warm Weather Concerns**

In the warmer months, when humidity and temperatures rise there are some health risks; hyperthermia is a concern for the aging. The temperature does not need to be in the 90's to be of concern for this issue. Hyperthermia is the name for a variety of heat related illness; such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Some of the signs and symptoms of hyperthermia may include fainting or falling down, staggering and unsteadiness, dizziness, cramps, swelling, weak, sick in the stomach, and extreme thirst. *Hyperthermia requires immediate medical attention.*

**Warm Weather Safety Tips**

- V. **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water, diluted sports drinks and juices. Coffee and tea are natural diuretics and can dehydrate a person. Avoiding or limiting caffeine is recommended. Be careful with plain water too. Drinking in excess can lead to dilution of important electrolytes.
  
- V. **Keep Cool:** Stay in air conditioning as much as possible. If the home does not have air conditioning, try to spend time at local places with air conditioning. For example, shopping malls, restaurants, libraries and senior centers.
  
- V. **Stay Out of the Sun:** If possible, avoid going out in the sun during peak hours between 10-4.
  
- V. **Dress Appropriately:** Wear light colored and loose fitting clothing. Most people find cotton fabrics preferable. If outside in the sun, wear broad brim hats and sunglasses that can protect UV rays.
  
- Vi. **Use Sunscreen and Bug Spray:** Look for a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher and re-apply as directed.

### **Cold Weather Concerns**

When it's cold outside and the temperatures drops the risk is higher for health problems and weather related injuries. Hypothermia and Frostbite are concerns for the aging population. Hypothermia can occur quickly because an aging individual can lose body heat fast. For the aging population, body temperature lower than 95 degrees is an immediate health issue. Possible risks include heart attack or kidney problems. A person does not need to be outside in the cold elements for hypothermia to occur. This could happen indoors if the room temperature falls below 66 degrees. Some possible signs of hypothermia to look for are behavioral changes—such as confusion, anger, and sleepiness. Other possible signs could be cold extremities, dizziness, shivering, slow breathing, and a slow heart rate. The aging group at risk for frostbit due to thinning of the skin and the risk increase if there is circulation issues. The most common areas for frostbite are ears, cheek/chins, fingers and toes. Some warning signs include: skin that is white, yellow, ashy or grayish, numbness and hard and/or waxy skin. An increase in falls can occur outside due to snowy and icy conditions. ***Hypothermia and frostbite require immediate medical attention.***

### **Cold Weather Safety Tips**

#### **Inside the Home**

- V. **Keep the Thermostat at 68 degrees**
  
- V. **Use Extra Blankets:** This helps keep the body warm at night and during the day.

- V. **Stay Active:** The person should try to move around the home as much as possible and stay active.
- V. **Dress for Warmth:** Wearing 2 or 3 layers of thins clothing helps control body temperatures.
- VI. **Keep Drafts Out:** Using door draft stoppers and ensuring the windows are closed and sealed helps keep the cold out. If there is a draft at the window putting plastic over windows can be beneficial.
- V. **Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning:** Use a carbon monoxide detector in the home and check the batteries.
- V. **Prepare for Power Outages:** To help feel safe and warm, keep extra blankets and non-perishable foods available. Also, keep extra flashlights and batteries.

#### **Outside the Home**

- V. **Dress for Warmth:** Wearing 2 or 3 thinner layers of loose fitting clothing is warmer. Keep covered by wearing hats, gloves, winter coats and boots. Using a scarf to cover the nose and mouth as needed to protect the lungs from cold air is smart dressing.
- V. **Preventing Injuries and Falls:** Make sure the walkways are clear of ice and snow. Wearing boots or shoes can help prevents slips and falls. If using a cane or walker, check the tips to see if they need to be replaced. \* *Before Shoveling snow and ice; ask your physician for guidelines.*
- V. **Wear Sunscreen and Sunglasses:** Look for a sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher and re-apply as directed. Make sure the sunglasses have UV Ray protection.

It is recommended to watch the local news for any weather related alerts and guidelines. As always, stay in communication with your physician and ask for guidance.

#### **Resources:**

- [Care.Com](#) “12 summer Safety Tips for the Elderly”.
- [HealthinAging.org](#) Trusted Information. Better Care. “Winter Safety tips for Older Adults”.
- [MedicineNet.com](#) Senior Health Center: Information on Aging. “Hot Weather Hazard for Older People”.
- National Institute on Aging. “Stay Safe in Cold Weather”.

- Rx Outreach, Inc – [rxoutreach.org](http://rxoutreach.org). “Hot Weather Tips for Seniors”
- Sage Minder Senior Health –[sageminder.com](http://sageminder.com). “Cold Weather Tips for Seniors and Preventing Hypothermia.

**June Activity Tip: Photo Scavenger Hunt**

**Equipment:** A camera or cell phone, scrapbook or 3 ring notebook, glue, markers, and stickers.

**1) Together, make a list of objects and community locations to visit. Plan a day trip around the community and take pictures of the individual with the objects or location. For example; a ball park, a local zoo, a library and a movie theater.**

**2) Print the pictures.**

**3) Together create a scrapbook of the scavenger hunt of your community.**

**\*\*\*Remember to be mindful of the weather in June. Wear sunscreen and protect the eyes if doing outside picture.**



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