

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike,
Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Why Am I So Cold? Hypothermia

One of the common changes people notice while they are aging is that they are more sensitive to cold temperatures.

The normal workings that keep our body warm may be affected by poor health and a weak immune system. Sometimes, hormonal changes, especially in women, can lead to feeling cold all the time. Low estrogen levels associated with menopause or low thyroid hormone levels are some examples of changes that commonly occur in women.

Your doctor may try to find out if your feeling cold all the time may be a symptom of a medical problem such as high blood pressure or diabetes. Low thyroid activity and high cholesterol can also affect your body's ability to regulate your temperature. Some drugs may also contribute to these symptoms. Medications used to treat high blood pressure and heart disease, such as beta blockers and calcium channel blockers, can affect blood vessels and blood circulation, which can lead to heat loss and hypothermia. Hypothermia is a condition characterized by a dangerously low body temperature.



Even healthy people who are growing older may also experience feeling cold. This is because the blood vessels, which help conserve body heat, are not as elastic as they used to be, and their response to changes in temperature become slower. Furthermore, different people may react to cold temperature in various ways, depending on their individual sensitivities. Feeling cold does not necessarily mean that you are sick or that you need treatment. Sometimes, the best thing to do is to wear a warm sweater or cozy pair of socks. If you have been feeling cold for some time, and bundling up does not seem to help, ask yourself if the unusual feeling is related to other symptoms. For example, have you noticed any changes in weight or any weakness? Do you feel cold all over or is it just your hands and feet? Help your doctor evaluate your symptoms and discuss with them.

Avoiding Hypothermia

During winter, anyone who wanders outdoors is at risk of hypothermia, a condition when the body temperature falls to below 95° F. To prevent hypothermia:

- Keep the temperature at home at least 65 degrees Fahrenheit (F) or 70 degrees Fahrenheit (F) if the senior is ill. A frail, older adult in a 60-degree house can develop mild hypothermia overnight.
- Wear warm clothes, including wool leg warmers for the arms and legs for added warmth.
- Use warm blankets in bed.
- Wear a knit hat indoors and a warm hat outside to avoid losing heat.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Keep warm by moving and walking around the house and lifting and stretching the arms and legs.

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Hypothermia (continued from Page 1)

If Hypothermia is Present

Signs of hypothermia include shivering, cold pale skin, slow breathing, slow pulse, weakness, drowsiness, confusion, and impaired judgment. If these signs are present:

- Wrap the person in blankets.
- Give them warm fluids. Do not give alcohol.
- Increase the room temperature.
- Call the doctor.
- Do not rub the person's skin.
- Avoid rapid re-warming. Apply warm hot water bottles wrapped in towels on the chest and abdomen.
- Watch out for signs of a heart attack (chest pain, shortness of breath, pain in the jaw, pale skin, sweating, and nausea). Call 911 immediately if these symptoms are present.

Tips to Keep a Cozy House

- Allow warm sunlight to come in the house during the day by keeping curtains open, but close them at night to have an added layer of insulation against the cold.
- To weatherproof the house, install storm windows, weather strips for door cracks, and add insulation.
- Close off rooms that are not in use. Move the bed and favorite chair to the warmest spot in the room and away from drafty windows.
- Dress warmly even while you are inside the house. Remember, avoid dehydration by drinking enough fluids.



Don't Fall - Be Safe!

Ice and snow is a serious hazard for older adults.

When walking outdoors, wear proper clothing (including hats, scarves, gloves, sweaters and coats). Use rubber soled shoes. Canes or walkers must have new treads.



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

National Energy Assistance Referral Hotline (NEAR) - 1-866-674-6327 (toll-free) or on the internet at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap.

If you have a limited income, you may qualify for help paying your heating bill. The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps keep families safe and healthy through initiatives that assist families with energy costs. Your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA), senior center, or community action agency may have information on these programs. Your local AAA can be reached at 1-800-582-7277.

*"I suggest you develop courage the same way you develop a muscle.
You develop a muscle by doing small things first."*

- Maya Angelou -

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Medical Problems That Make You Feel Cold —



Aside from aging, there are a few medical reasons that can make you feel unusually cold. You may:

- Have low thyroid function, hypothyroidism, or be anemic. Your doctor will recommend some blood tests to find out if you have these problems.
- Be underweight, with too little fat to insulate your body.
- Have too little muscle. Muscles can generate heat and warm you up, so try to build more muscle by doing some strength training exercises.
- Be stressed out, which causes your blood vessels to constrict. Try some relaxation techniques to improve your blood circulation.

Wear clothes in layers and drink hot liquids such as ginger tea. If you like foods spiced with ginger or red pepper, you can enjoy a meal and keep warm, too. Finally, use breathing techniques from yoga to help relax your body and improve your circulation.

Source: www.retirementhomes.com

Are You Eligible for “Extra Help” with Medicare Part D?

Low Income Subsidy (LIS) or “Extra Help” is a discount plan that can: lower your prescription co-pays; cover all or part of your Medicare Part D monthly premiums; or eliminate the “doughnut hole” of coverage for your medications. Part D is Medicare’s prescription drug coverage and is available to anyone eligible for Medicare Part A or Part B. Those with Medicare may enroll in Part D coverage through either a stand-alone plan or a Medicare Advantage plan. To be eligible for “Extra Help,” income guidelines and qualifications must be met, and the Area Agency on Aging District 7 (AAA7) can help determine whether you might be able to benefit from this program.



Each year, our Agency conducts outreach to our communities in order to better identify who might be eligible for the “Extra Help” and Medicare Savings programs as there are a large amount of individuals who are eligible, but currently not receiving these benefits. Just last year, in 2014, 91 people, who called our Agency to inquire about the program, learned they were eligible and all combined were able to save a total of \$306,435.00 for an average savings of \$3,367.42 per person. In addition, we were able to save 993 individuals an additional \$223,590.00 in savings by running Medicare Part D comparisons and changing their Part D plans for an average savings of \$225.00 per person during the open enrollment period for Medicare in 2014. All of the individuals we were able to reach out to throughout our communities during the year were also assisted in additional ways, including Medicare Part D sign-ups, help with finding a Medicare supplemental insurance, providing other services made available through our Agency, and references to additional community organizations that may be able to help.

If you would like to find out if you are eligible for “extra help” with your Medicare Part D coverage, call us - we can help! Contact our Agency Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 4:30 pm toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. We can complete the application over the phone in just a few minutes. In addition, we can also assist you with any other Medicare questions you might have. Call us at 1-800-582-7277 or e-mail to info@aaa7.org.



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Safety Tips - *Fireplaces and Space Heaters*

Winter is the time when fireplaces and space heaters are used more often. To keep warm and safe during winter:

- Install extra smoke detectors near heating sources and make sure you check their batteries twice a year.
- Keep space heaters away from curtains and upholstered chairs. Avoid using extension cords with your space heaters or keeping electrical cords under the carpets.
- Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. CO (carbon monoxide) is created when fuels burn incompletely. CO poisoning can cause illness and even death. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice around the outlet to the outside.
- Keep the furnace filters clean.
- Open the fireplace flue before lighting a fire. Close it when not in use to prevent cold air from blowing in.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the house and know how to use it.
- Have a disaster kit ready for winter storms. Kits should include enough food and water for several days, medications, a radio, flashlight, extra batteries, and first-aid essentials.

