

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!**



DECEMBER 2022

Hypothermia - Shivering

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. Shivering is likely the first thing you’ll notice as the temperature starts to drop because it’s your body’s automatic defense against cold temperature — an attempt to warm itself.

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.

However, 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 responses 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 just put on a warm sweater or a 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 by discussing 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° F–70° F, especially if the senior is ill. A frail, older adult in a

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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.

If Hypothermia is Present

Signs of hypothermia include shivering, cold pale skin, slow breathing, slow pulses, weakness, drowsiness, confusion, and impaired judgment.

If these signs are present:

- Wrap the older 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.



Keep a Cozy House

- Allow warm sunlight to get 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 strip 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.

Our Resource Center is OPEN and available to answer your questions about home and community-based resources in your community!



1-800-582-7277
info@aaa7.org

HEAP Home Energy Assistance Program

Now open for applications for 2022-2023.
This program can help eligible Ohioans manage their heating bills. Applications are available from your local Community Action Agency

If interested or if you have questions, contact your county Community Action Agency or the AAA7 Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277.

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—

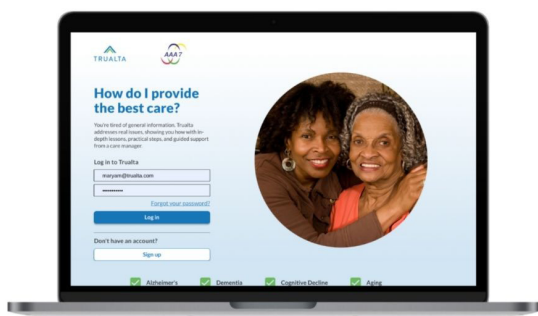
- Have low thyroid function, hypothyroidism, or be anemic. Your doctor will recommend some blood tests to find out if you have these problems.
- Be underweight, with too little fat to insulate your body, or have too little muscle. Muscles can generate heat and warm you up, so try to build more muscle 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.

Trualta helps families learn skills to manage care at home, provided for free by AAA7



- You can register today to access an **interactive eLearning environment**
- Short, quick lessons created by experts in aging
- Easy to use for all ages, completely private and **accessible 24/7**
- **No app required**, view on any browser, laptop, phone or tablet

The AAA7 is excited to offer this interactive opportunity to caregivers to support them in their caregiving role at no charge!

Sign up today!

aaa7.trualta.com



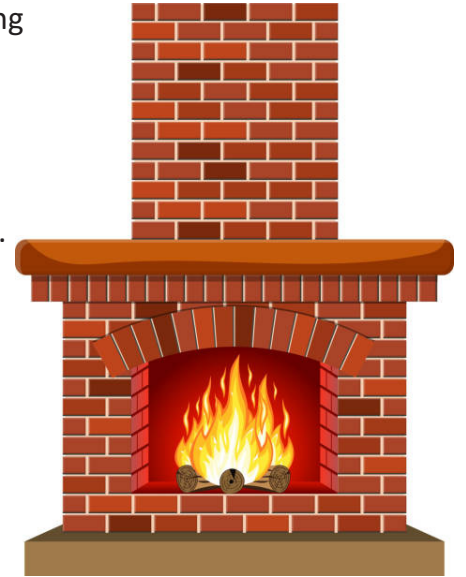
Memory Care Hypothermia

People with Alzheimer’s may dress inappropriately, wearing little clothing in cold weather. Of those who wander, those not located within 24 hours of the last time seen, 46% may die, usually succumbing to cold and thirst.

Safety Tips - Fireplaces and Space Heaters

To keep warm and safe during winter:

- Install smoke detectors near heating sources and check 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 equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO poisoning can cause illness and even death. The venting for exhaust must be kept clear and unobstructed. Remove 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.



Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs.

The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.