

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS"

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.

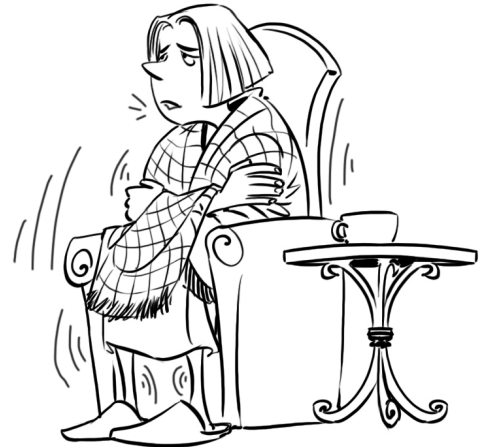
Feeling cold all the time *may* be a symptom of a medical problem such as high blood pressure or diabetes. *Low thyroid* activity and *high cholesterol* can also affect your body's ability to regulate your temperature. Some drugs may also contribute to these symptoms. Medications used to treat *high 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 them with him or her.



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

Referral Hotline 1-866-674-6327 (toll-free). For details visit, <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/623>

If you have a limited income, you may qualify for help paying your heating bill. Ask your local Area Agency on Aging, senior center, or community action agency for information on these programs.

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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 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 elderly person in blankets.
- ➔ Give him 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 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.

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.



Live Life Laughing!

You too! I confuse my pets' names with my grandkids' names.



Inspiration

Nothing is impossible. The word itself says 'I'm possible!'
— Audrey Hepburn

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.

Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

Our Purpose

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

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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800-565-1533
or www.comfortofhome.com

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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.

NEXT ISSUE...ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE - PREPARING THE HOME

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

Aside from aging, there are a few medical reasons that can make you feel unusually cold. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. One of the common changes people notice while they are aging is that they are *less* sensitive to cold temperatures.
T F
2. Medications cannot lead to heat loss and hypothermia.
T F
3. People with Alzheimer's may dress inappropriately, wearing little clothing in cold weather.
T F
4. Signs of hypothermia include shivering, cold pale skin, slow breathing, slow pulses, weakness, drowsiness, confusion, and impaired judgment.
T F
5. For safety, keep the furnace filters clean.
T F
6. Healthy older people never experience feeling cold.
T F
7. Muscles can generate heat and warm you up, so it is important to try to build more muscle by doing some strength training exercises.
T F
8. CO (carbon monoxide) poisoning cannot cause severe illness and even death.
T F
9. *Hypothermia* is a condition characterized by a dangerously low body temperature.
T F
10. A frail, older adult in a 60-degree house can develop mild hypothermia overnight.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____