



Using blankets or throws and drinking hot liquids can help older adults fight the effects of winter chills.

## Don't Let Cold Weather Negatively Affect You

» BY JULIE ROSE

Seniors have a higher chance of being affected by cold weather. The changes we experience with aging can make it more challenging for seniors to be aware that our body is cold, so a dangerous health issue can arise very quickly.

As we age, our bodies naturally experience a decline in metabolic rate. This reduces our ability to generate heat. Also, with aging, the fat layer below a senior's skin begins to thin. This contributes to being cold.

Medical conditions like diabetes and thyroid problems can make it more difficult to stay warm. Memory problems can cause seniors to forget to bundle up as needed. Some prescription medications and over-the-counter medications can affect your body heat. Talk with your doctor to see if your medications could affect your body heat and – if so – what you can do.

Falls on slick, wintry surfaces occur more frequently with seniors. If you need to go out, be very careful navigating icy and slippery surfaces.

According to the National Institute on Aging, about 20% of injuries related to exposure to cold occur in the home. The institute provides some helpful recommendations:

- Set your heat to at least 68 degrees.
- Place a rolled towel in front of doors to keep drafts out.
- If you have gaps around your win-



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dows, use weather stripping or caulk to keep the cold air out.

- Dress warmly on cold days even if you are staying inside. Wear socks and slippers and use a throw or blanket – these will help you stay warm.
- Use additional covers when you sleep. Wearing thermal underwear

under your pajamas and a head covering help keep you warm.

- Be sure you eat enough food. You need some body fat to stay warm.
- Avoid alcohol or limit it as it can make you lose body heat.

Also, make sure someone is checking on you during cold weather. If there's a power

outage and you don't have heat, try to stay with a relative or friend who has heat.

Dehydration can be a serious health issue for seniors. Make staying hydrated a priority. This is the perfect time of year to enjoy hot tea and cocoa.

According to Harvard Health, seniors should avoid outdoor exercise when the temperature is much below 32 degrees. It's best to exercise during the warmest part of the day.

Winter can be a beautiful time of year but it's very important to take good care of yourself during the cold weather to prevent health issues.

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