

MARY WADE



A five star senior community with a tradition of quality healthcare
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Why is Grandma Always Cold?

Tips for keeping Seniors warm

As the human body ages, it becomes more and more vulnerable to the effects of cold temperatures. Seniors are most susceptible for five main reasons:

1. Decrease in metabolic rate which can lower body temperature below 98.6
2. Weaker circulation of blood throughout the body, especially to the hands and feet
3. Thinner skin which is less able to hold heat inside the body
4. Physical disorders such as hypothyroidism, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease
5. Some medications that treat various conditions affect the body's ability to regulate internal temperature

Hypothermia at 70 degrees! Really?

This time of year, outdoor temperatures can be brutally cold. But, with a reliable furnace and proper insulation, a home can be quite comfortable. However, seniors are often 'freezing' even when the indoor temperature is mid to upper 70s. Why is that?

- First, seniors can lose heat faster than they can produce it.
- Second, most people think hypothermia is the result of prolonged exposure to frigid conditions, but it can occur in mild or even warm conditions.
- Third, due to seniors' susceptibility to cold, they can feel the *extreme* effects of cold when room temperatures feel warm or even hot to younger people.

Hypothermia is extremely dangerous when the body drops below 95 degrees. According to the Centers for Disease Control: *"More than 13,400 hypothermia deaths occurred in the United States between 2003 and 2013. A statistically significant increase in death rates from hypothermia occurred over the decade."*

For seniors, just under half who get hypothermia die from it. It is a severe problem.

Help Seniors Stay Warm

Every situation is different, but for most seniors staying warm is a matter of taking the right precautions.

1. Get out of the cold and into a warm environment (if the house is too cold, go to a neighbor's house or to the local mall or library)
2. Add layers of clothing (even indoors) and make sure to use the best fabrics for preserving heat (wool, heavy cotton, knitted scarves, and hats, etc.)
3. Eat healthy carbohydrates to increase metabolism (fruit, honey, vegetables, etc.)
4. Drink fluids (water, tea, fruit juice, etc.)
5. Exercise. Move body parts (arms, legs, hands, fingers, toes) to improve circulation and warm up the coldest areas
6. Remove tight-fitting jewelry or any article of clothing that restrict blood flow

Early Signs of Hypothermia

- Feeling cold and can't warm up
- Uncontrollable shivering and shaking
- The 'Umbles': stumbles, mumbles, grumbles are signs that cold is affecting the body and brain

If these symptoms are present, call a doctor immediately.