



Cold Weather Safety for Older Adults

Most people feel cold every now and then during the winter. But getting extremely cold can make a person very sick. Changes that come with aging can make it harder to be aware of getting cold. And older adults can lose body heat faster than when they were young.

A big chill can turn into a serious problem called hypothermia. Hypothermia is what happens when the body temperature gets very low. For an older person, a body temperature of 95°F or lower can cause many health problems, such as a heart attack, kidney problems, liver damage, or worse.

People who are sick or have underlying medical conditions may have special problems keeping warm.

- Diabetes can keep blood from flowing normally to provide warmth.
- Thyroid problems can make it hard to maintain a normal body temperature.
- Parkinson's disease and arthritis can make it difficult to put on more clothes, use a blanket, or get out of the cold.
- Memory loss can cause a person to go outside without the proper warm clothing.

Additionally, some medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, can affect body heat. Ask a doctor or pharmacist about this.

Being aware of signs of hypothermia symptoms can assist in identifying it and getting help as soon as possible.

Early signs of hypothermia include:

- Cold feet and hands
- Puffy or swollen face
- Pale skin
- Shivering, although in some cases the person doesn't shiver
- Slower than normal speech or slurring of words
- Acting sleepy
- Being angry or confused

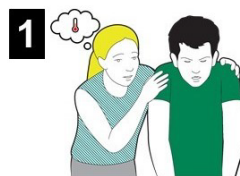
Later signs of hypothermia include:

- Moving slowly, trouble walking, or being clumsy
- Stiff and jerky arm or leg movements
- Slow heartbeat
- Slow, shallow breathing
- Blacking out or losing consciousness



Helping someone who is showing signs of hypothermia include:

- Calling 9-1-1 right away
- Moving them to a warmer place
- Wrapping them in a warm blanket, towels, or coats
- Giving them something warm to drink, but avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine, such as regular coffee.
- Do not rewarm the person too quickly, such as with a heating lamp, heating pad or hot bath because it can cause heart arrhythmias.
- Do not rub their arms and legs because massaging limbs can put stress on the heart and lungs.



1 Move somewhere warm



2 Replace wet clothes
Wrap in blankets



3 Give them a warm drink.