

## Quick Tips on Keeping the Elderly Warm

By Kate McCarthy

We all feel the cold when temperatures dip below zero, but our elderly loved ones truly suffer when arctic blasts blow through.

The Elderly feel the cold intensely and have greater health risks when temperature drops. Older adults tend to produce less body heat than younger people, and it's harder for them to tell when their body temperature is too low. The elderly suffer more in cold weather due to having poor blood circulations in their hands and feet.

Some medications thin the blood making matters worse. Inactivity and poor nutrition add to their bodies not handling the cold well.

It can be very dangerous because when an elderly body begins to lose body heat. What can be done to help?

- Keep thermostat set above 75\*

For many elderly turning up the heat to 75\* is just getting things comfortable. That may be a bit too warm for the rest of the family, so create a "warm room" for your chilled loved one. Keep their space warm and inviting where their favorite things are easily accessible. It is a loving way to keep your elderly family member cozy and snug.



*The Elderly suffer when arctic temperatures hit.*

- Wear layers of natural fiber clothing

Wearing two or three thinner layers of loose-fitting clothing is warmer than a single layer of thick clothing. Several layers of thin clothing worn indoors help insulate the body by trapping warmth in the air pockets between the layers and are a great way for the elderly to keep the cold at bay. Using natural fiber clothing, such as wool or silk or polypropylene inner layers also works at keeping body temperatures level. Multiple thin layers that can be easily removed prevent overheating. Wearing appropriate clothing to bed to maintain body temperature while your elderly loved one is sleeping is important as well.

- Use a throw or light weight comforter

Snuggle up under a light weight throw is a wonderful way to stay warm. Use a throw blanket to place across your elderly loved one's lap or to cover their feet and shoulders to help them stay warm. Don't be tempted to use a heavy quilt of blanket on your elderly loved one as the weight may be too much for them. Throws and shawls made of fleece are particularly useful because they are not only warm, but also lightweight and less bulky than other fabrics.

- Eat high calories foods & drink hot tea, chocolate or coffee

Hot drinks can really ward off the chill and also work to warm cold hands. Eating higher calorie comfort foods such as stews and casseroles, during winter time also helps your loved ones maintain a good nutritional balance and builds up their natural reserves.

- Heat clothes in dryer before dressing

On super cold mornings it is a treat to dress in warmed clothes. For those who suffer from the constant chill, it is a good practice to have the clothing warmed. Also heat up PJs before bedtime and use a good, old fashioned hot water bottle to heat the sheets at night.

- Seal drafts in house

Your elderly loved one will enjoy their favorite chair more if it's placed in the warmest spot in a room. Sitting in a draft often leads to catching cold so arrange furniture away from drafts. Use a rolled towel to seal off drafts under doors or plastic wrap stop windows from letting in a draft. Use insulated drapes on windows. Be sure to close the drapes at night and on cloudy days to reduce heat loss through windows.

- Use a light hat & mittens to maintain body heat

A stylish cap or light weight mittens worn in the house can make a world of difference when your elderly loved one is chilly. Fleece slippers worn around the house to help keep their feet warm. Look for non-skid bottoms so there is no need to worry about slips and falls.

Simple measures can really help keep your aging loved one safe and comfortable, especially during the bitter cold of winter.



**HomeAid Health Care**  
*Helping Hands at Home*

Kate McCarthy is Director of Operations for HomeAid Health Care which provides services for the elderly who wish to remain safe and independent at home. HomeAid is sister company to Prairie Home Assisted Living which has served the physical, spiritual, mental and health needs of their residents since 1999. Together the two companies provide comprehensive care for the elderly in the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin.