

LiVSafe is a conscious safety initiative of Liberty Videocon to help people live safer, secure lives through an education series of proactive and preventative suggestions in the safety arena. This document does not purport to promote any product directly or indirectly.

Effective Tips for augmenting safety during winters for older adults

Overview

When the temperature drops, older adults run a higher risk of health problems and injuries related to the weather including hypothermia, frostbite, and falls in snow. It's important that they and those who care for them take certain precautions at this time of year.

We at Liberty Videocon General Insurance value the importance of safety for the senior members of our society and accordingly, intend to suggest some useful measures and precautions for the same. We sincerely hope that the measures suggested in this document will help follow better practices when it comes to implementing a safe winter for the older adults.



Source: http://www.yourcanterbury.co.uk/polopoly_fs/1.1128231.1321458399/image/2756676695.jpg_gen/derivatives/landscape_630/2756676695.jpg

Important Points to Know

Hypothermia

Older adults tend to generate less body heat than younger people, and it's difficult for them to determine low temperature. This can be dangerous because when your body is in the cold for too long, it begins to lose heat quickly. The result can be hypothermia - a dangerous drop in body temperature.

Warning Signs

Lots of shivering, cold skin that is pale or ashy, feeling very tired, confused and sleepy, feeling weak, problem to walk, slowing down of breathing or heart rate.

Things to Do

Do not rely on shivering alone as a warning sign, since older people tend to shiver less or not at all as their body temperature drops. Stay indoors when it's very cold outside, especially if it's also very windy. Keep indoor temperatures at about 65 degrees. If you have to go outside, don't stay out for very long, and go indoors if you start shivering. Stay dry as wet clothing chills your body quickly. Wear layers as wearing two or three thinner layers of loose fitting clothing is warmer than a single layer of thick clothing. Also wear:

- A hat
- Gloves or mittens (mittens are warmer)
- A coat and boots
- A scarf to cover your mouth and nose and protect your lungs from cold air.

Frostbite

Extreme cold can cause frostbite-damage to the skin that can go all the way down to the bone. Frostbite usually affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers and toes. In severe cases, frostbite can result in loss of limbs. People with heart disease and other circulation problems are more likely to get frostbite.

Warning Signs

Skin that's white or ashy (for people with darker skin) or grayish-yellow, skin that feels hard or waxy, numbness. If you think you or someone else has frostbite, call for medical help immediately. A person with frostbite may also have hypothermia, so check for those symptoms, too.

Things to Do: Cover up all parts of your body when you go outside. If your skin turns red or dark or starts hurting, go inside right away. If frostbite occurs, place frostbitten parts of your body in warm (not hot) water.

Injury While Shoveling Snow

When the weather is cold, heart works extra hard to keep you warm. Working hard, such as shoveling snow may put too much strain on your heart, especially if you have heart disease. Shoveling can also be dangerous if you have problems with balance, or 'thin bones' (osteoporosis). Ask your healthcare provider if it is safe for you to shovel snow or do other hard work in the cold.

Falls

Slips and falls are common in the winter, especially in icy and snowy conditions. Carefully shovel steps and walkways to your home or hire someone to shovel for you. Do not walk on icy or snowy sidewalks, look for sidewalks that are dry and have been cleared. Wear boots with non-skid soles so you are less likely to slip when you walk. If you use a cane, replace the rubber tip before it is worn smooth. You might also buy an ice pick-like attachment that fits onto the end of the cane to help keep you from slipping when you walk.

Fires & Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Burning wood, natural gas, kerosene and other fuels produces a deadly gas called carbon monoxide that you cannot see or smell. Unless fireplaces, wood and gas stoves and gas appliances are properly vented, cleaned, and used, they can leak dangerous amounts of carbon monoxide. These and other appliances, such as kerosene and electric heaters, can also be fire hazards.

Things to Do

Call an inspector - ask your local fire department to recommend an inspector or look up 'chimney cleaning' for your area. Have chimneys and flues inspected yearly and cleaned when necessary. Open a window - even just a crack will do - when using a kerosene stove. Put a smoke detector and battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in areas where you use fireplaces, wood stoves, or kerosene heaters. Be careful with space heaters - make sure space heaters are at least 3 feet away from anything that might catch fire, such as curtains, bedding and furniture. Keep a fire extinguisher handy that can be used to douse various types of fires, including chemical fires, in areas where you use fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene heaters. Never try to heat your home using a gas stove, charcoal grill or other stoves not made for home heating.

Accidents While Driving

Adults aged 65 years and above are involved in more car accidents per mile driven than those in nearly all other age groups. Because winter driving can be more hazardous you should have your car 'winterised' before the bad weather sets in. This means having the antifreeze, tires, and windshield wipers checked and changed if necessary. Take a cell phone with you when driving in bad weather. Always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to arrive, so they can call for help if you are late. Do not drive on icy roads, overpasses, or bridges as far as possible; look for another route. Stock your car with basic emergency supplies, such as:

- A first aid kit
- Blankets
- Extra warm clothes
- Booster cables
- A windshield scraper
- A shovel and rock salt, a bag of sand or cat litter (to pour on ice or snow in case your wheels get stuck)
- A container of water and canned or dried foods, can opener and flashlight.



Source: <http://media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/ab/b4/c9/a6b4c9a6ce62d78426fab0d17fcaa1f6.jpg>

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