

Alliance Handshake

January 2018

Another new year and time again to personally thank you for allowing us to be your home healthcare provider. We hope we were successful in achieving our stated goals at the beginning of 2017:

- to help each one of you improve your quality of life while increasing your independence;
- to leave a lasting, positive impression concerning the quality of our services and caregivers.

We will continue to commit to achieving these goals in 2018! Happy New Year!

With the recent frigid weather we have been having, I thought an important topic for this newsletter would be Cold Weather Safety. If you are like most people, you feel cold every now and then during the winter. What you may not know is that just being really cold can make you very sick. The following is taken from a newsletter published by the National Institutes of Health Institute on Aging**.

-William Van Ry, Owner & CEO

Memory Game



It is very important to exercise the mind as well as the body. With each edition of our newsletter, we will include a memory word game for you to complete.

Word Game



Last issues word: **STAINED**

said sent stand adit instead

saint seta stead aide neat

sand side stein anise nest

sane sine tend ante east

sate site tide ariti edit

satin snide tied asitle dais

seat snit tine idea date

sedan staid tine a ides dean

send stain tisane inset deist

dent detain diet dine dint

The average is 36 words. Did you meet or beat this standard?

Can you find 53 words in next issues word **DIETARY?**

Older adults can lose body heat fast – faster than when they were young. Changes in your body that come with aging can make it harder for you to be aware of getting cold. A big chill can turn into a dangerous problem before an older person even knows what’s happening. This serious problem is called hypothermia.

HYPOTHERMIA is what happens when your body temperature gets very low. For an older person, a body temperature colder than 95° F can cause such health problems as heart attack, kidney problems, liver damage, or worse.

Being outside in the cold, or even being in a very cold house, can lead to hypothermia. Try to stay away from cold places, and pay attention to how cold it is where you are.

Keep Warm Inside

Living in a cold house, apartment, or other building can cause hypothermia. In fact, hypothermia can happen to someone in a nursing home or group facility. If someone you know is in a group facility, pay attention to the inside temperature and to whether that person is dressed warmly enough.

People who are sick may have special problems keeping warm. Do not let it get too cold inside and dress warmly. Even if you keep your home temperature between 60 and 65 ° F that may not be warm enough to keep you safe. This is a special problem if you live alone because there is no one else to feel the chilliness of the house or notice if you are

having symptoms of hypothermia. Here are some tips for keeping warm while you are inside:

- Set your heat at 68° F or higher. To save on heating bills close off rooms you are not using. Close the vents and shut the doors in these rooms. Keep the basement door closed. Place a rolled towel in front of all doors to keep out drafts.
- Make sure your house isn’t losing heat through windows. Keep your blinds and curtains closed. If you have gaps around windows try using weather stripping or caulk to keep the cold air out.
- Dress warmly on cold days even if you are staying in the house. Throw a blanket over your legs. Wear socks and slippers.
- When you go to sleep, wear long underwear under your pajamas and use extra covers. Wear a cap or hat.
- Make sure you eat enough food to maintain your weight. If you don’t eat well you might have less fat under your skin. Body fat helps you stay warm.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation if at all. Alcoholic drinks can make you lose body heat.
- Ask family or friends to check on you during cold weather. If a power outage leaves you without heat, try to stay with a friend or relative.

You may be tempted to warm your room with a space heater. But, some space

heaters are fire hazards and others can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

Bundle up on Windy, Cold Days

A heavy wind can quickly lower your body temperature. If the weather forecast is for a windy, cold day, try to stay inside or in a warm place. If you must go out, wear warm clothes and do not stay out in the cold and wind for a long time. Here are some other tips:

- Dress for the weather if you have to go out on chilly, cold, or damp days
- Wear loose layers of clothing. The air between the layers helps to keep you warm.
- Put on a hat and scarf. You lose a lot of body heat when your head and neck are uncovered.
- Wear a weatherproof coat or jacket if it is snowy.

Illness, Medicines, & Cold Weather

Some illness may make it harder for your body to stay warm. Diabetes, thyroid problems, Parkinson's disease, memory loss, and arthritis are problems that can make it harder for older adults to stay warm. Talk with your doctor about your health problems and how to prevent hypothermia.

Taking some medicines and not being active also can affect body heat. These include medicines you get from your doctor and those you buy over-the-counter. Ask your doctor if the medicines you take may affect body heat. Always talk with your doctor before you stop taking any medication. Here are some things

to talk about with your doctor to stay safe in cold weather.

- Ask about signs of hypothermia.
- Ask about any of your health problems and medicines that can make hypothermia a special problem for you. Your doctor can help you find ways to prevent hypothermia.
- Ask about safe ways to stay active even when it is cold outside.

Warning Signs of Hypothermia

Sometimes it is hard to tell if a person has hypothermia. Look for clues. Is the house very cold? Is the person dressed for cold weather? Is the person speaking more slowly than normal and having trouble keeping his or her balance? Watch for signs of hypothermia in yourself too. You might become confused if your body temperature gets very low. Talk to your family and friends about the warning signs so they can look out for you.

Early signs of hypothermia:

- cold feet and hands;
- puffy or swollen face;
- pale skin;
- shivering (in some cases the person with hypothermia does not shiver);
- slower than normal speech or slurring words;
- being angry or confused.

Later signs of hypothermia:

- moving slowly, trouble walking, or being clumsy;

- stiff and jerky arm or leg movements;
- slow heartbeat;
- slow, shallow breathing;
- blacking out or losing consciousness.

**CALL 911 RIGHT AWAY IF YOU THINK
YOU OR SOMEONE ELSE HAS
WARNING SIGNS OF HYPOTHERMIA**

After calling 911, try to move the person to a warmer place. Wrap the person in a warm blanket, towels, or coats – whatever is handy. Even your own body warmth will help...lie close, but be gentle. Give the person something warm to drink but avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine, such as regular.

coffee. Do not rub the person's arms or legs. And, do not try to warm the person in a bath or with a heating pad.

Hypothermia and the ER

The only way to tell for sure that someone has hypothermia is to use a special thermometer that can read very low body temperatures. Most hospitals have these thermometers. In the emergency room, doctors will warm the person's body from inside out. For example, they may give the person warm fluids directly using an IV. Recovery depends on how long the person was exposed to the cold and his or her general health.

** <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/cold-weather-safety-older-adults>

Help for heating bills: Contact National Energy Assistance Referral Service at 1-866-674-6327 (toll-free; TTY, 1-866-367-6228) or email energyassistance@cat.org to get to information on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

