



HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE ON AGING

1300 S. GRAND AVENUE • BUILDING B, 2ND FLOOR • SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA • 92705
PHONE: (714) 567-7500 • FAX: (714) 567-5021 • TDD: (714) 550-9472



Cold Weather Can Cause Serious Medical Conditions

By: Erin Ulibarri, MPH, CHES

Southern California residents are about to experience some unseasonably cold weather with overnight temperatures plummeting to the 30's and 40's. These low temperatures can cause hypothermia, a medical condition where your body temperature drops too much. This is particularly important to older adults who often have heart problems or other illnesses or who take medications that can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature. You don't have to be outside to be affected with hypothermia; if your home is poorly insulated you risk developing hypothermia too. Even mildly cool temperatures of 60-65 degrees can trigger the condition.

Hypothermia symptoms include:

- Confusion, dizziness, exhaustion and shivering
- Weak pulse and low blood pressure
- Memory loss and slurred speech

If any of these symptoms appear seek medical attention immediately.

With these cold temperatures, people will be looking for ways to keep themselves warm, healthy, and safe. Some tips:

- Layer your clothing. Wear heavy socks, a hat and mittens.
- Be sure your home is well-insulated and your doors and windows are caulked and weather-stripped. You want to keep the cold air out and the heated air in.
- Change your furnace filters and keep vents and registers free of any obstructions.
- Spend some of the daylight hours in public places like libraries, senior centers, or shopping malls where it is warm. While you're sleeping, turn the heat down and use blankets and warm sleepwear.
- Do not use barbeques or other outdoor heating devices inside; they produce deadly carbon monoxide. Keep space heaters at least 3 feet away from draperies or any flammable items. Make sure the heaters or cords are not fall risks.

There are many assistance programs available for low-income seniors in California to help offset the cost of utility bills as heater use increases. Eligibility requirements differ between the programs. For more information on these programs and how to obtain an application, call the Office on Aging Information and Assistance line at **1-800-510-2020** or **(714) 567-7500**. Our friendly and knowledgeable specialists also have resource information on meals, in-home care, healthcare, transportation, legal, caregiving assistance, prescription insurance, exercise classes and much more!

PAULA BURRIER-LUND, Director, Housing & Community Services Department

KAREN ROPER, Executive Director, Office on Aging

Information & Assistance: (800) 510-2020 or (714) 567-7500 • Email: officeonaging@ocgov.com • www.officeonaging.ocgov.com