



Building Better Health for Seniors

How to Handle Colder Weather

Well, winter is officially here, and that means colder temperatures! Power failures, dangerous road conditions and chilly temperatures can make it hard to stay warm and safe, especially for infants and seniors. Here are some tips to help you get through the winter so you can enjoy the spring!

- Keep a “Winter Survival Kit” in both your home and car. These kits should have supplies to last many days.
- Be safe when heating your home. Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions when using a wood stove, fireplace or space heater.
- Watch what you eat and drink. You can stay warmer by eating well-balanced meals and not drinking beverages with alcohol or caffeine.
- Wear clothes that will keep you warm and dry. Your winter wardrobe should include a hat, scarf or knit mask to cover your face and mouth, mittens, water-resistant coat and boots and sleeves that are snug at the wrist. Wearing many layers of loose-fitting clothing will help lessen the chance that you will sweat and feel too warm. Sweating can cause you to lose body heat.
- Don’t overdo it. Colder temperatures can make the heart work overtime to keep you warm. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, talk to your doctor about doing outdoor chores, like shoveling snow.

- Be careful when you visit family and friends. Snow and ice can make it difficult to travel during this time of year. Listen for travel advisories on the radio and television. Check to make sure your Winter Survival Kit for your car is filled with supplies.

For Your Home	For Your Car
<p>Food = include items that do not need to be cooked or refrigerated in case there is a power failure. Some examples are crackers, bread, cereal, canned vegetables, and dried fruits.</p> <p>Water = include water that is bottled or stored in clean containers in case the water pipes freeze or break.</p> <p>Medicines = include many days worth of medicine for each family member.</p>	<p>Blankets</p> <p>Can opener</p> <p>First aid kit</p> <p>Flashlight and extra batteries</p> <p>High-calorie canned or dried foods</p> <p>Jumper cables</p> <p>Maps</p> <p>Shovel</p> <p>Water</p>

For more information on this topic, please visit the following Web site:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>

Brought to you by
Kansas State Employees
Health Care Commission:



Ask An Expert

Driving: Knowing When It's No Longer Safe

Question: My daughter is concerned about my ability to drive safely at my age. How will I know when I should no longer be driving?

Answer:

Getting older does not always mean you are a bad driver, but, as you grow older, you may experience changes that can affect how well you drive. For example, your joints may stiffen and your muscles may not be as strong. This can make it hard to control the steering wheel or look over your shoulder while backing up. Reflexes tend to become slower as you age, which means you may not be able to step quickly on the brakes or swerve out of the way to avoid an accident. You also may not hear or see as well as you once did, so hearing an ambulance siren or trying to merge with traffic may be more difficult.

Medical conditions can also affect how well a person drives. Cataracts, glaucoma and macular degeneration can cause problems with eyesight, while people with Alzheimer's disease may have trouble remembering how to get to places. Some medicines can cause tiredness and blood sugar or blood pressure levels to drop too low. These side effects can make it hard to drive safely.

Below are some warning signs of unsafe driving:

- You feel nervous while driving.
- You notice you have more "close calls," or times when you are almost in an accident.
- You have a hard time paying attention to the road while driving.

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Research Highlights

New Vaccine May Offer a New Way of Treating Cancer

A company in Massachusetts has been working on creating a new cancer vaccine. This new



vaccine, called Oncophage[®] (vitespen), is given to people who already have cancer. It is used to treat the person's cancer, not to protect them from getting it.

Scientists are currently studying Oncophage to treat skin cancer that has spread to other areas of the body and kidney cancer.

Oncophage is specially made for each person. Scientists use cancer cells from the person's tumor as a main ingredient in the vaccine. Once the vaccine is made, the person receives shots for many weeks to treat the cancer.

Giving a person the vaccine tells the person's immune system to find other cells in the body similar to the ones in the vaccine. Once these cells are found, the immune system attacks and destroys them. Because the vaccine is designed to only find cancer cells, healthy cells are not harmed. This means the vaccine may not cause side effects, like upset stomach, vomiting and hair loss, often seen with other types of cancer treatments.

Generic Medicine Update

Generic medicines are just as safe and effective as brand name medicines. They have the same active ingredients, dosage form and strength. They meet the same quality standards. On average, Caremark plan participants save 60 percent when they fill their prescriptions with generics instead of brand name medicines. Why do they cost less? Because companies that make them save on the cost of research and development which was performed by the company that produced the brand name medicine. They pass the savings on to you. You may have a lower co-pay for a generic medicine. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about changing to a generic medicine.

Brand Name	Generic Name	What It May Be Used For
Amaryl®	glimepiride	Diabetes
MetaGlip™	glipizide and metformin	Diabetes

This table contains prescription brand name drugs that are registered or trademarks of pharmaceutical manufacturers that are not affiliated with Caremark.

Co-payment, co-insurance or co-pay means the amount a plan participant is required to pay for a prescription in accordance with a Plan, which may be a deductible, a percentage of the prescription price, a fixed amount or other charge, with the balance, if any, paid by the Plan.

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If you notice one or more of these warning signs, you may want to ask a professional about your driving.

If you choose to stop driving, consider using public transportation or carpooling with family and friends as alternate ways to go places. Churches and senior centers may also provide services for people who no longer drive.

For more information on this topic, please visit the following Web sites:

AARP

http://www.aarp.org/families/driver_safety/

National Institute on Aging

<http://www.niapublications.org/engagepages/drivers.asp>

Staying Healthy

Stay Healthy this Winter

In the winter, doctors' offices are full of people with stuffy noses, achy muscles, fevers and coughs. This year let's make a New Year's resolution to stay healthy!

Illnesses like "the flu" and "the common cold" are caused by germs. Germs live inside tiny droplets that are made when a sick person coughs or sneezes. If a healthy person comes in contact with these droplets, that person may get sick.

People can pick up germs by:

- being near someone with a cold or the flu who is coughing or sneezing, or
- touching something that has the tiny droplets on it, and then touching their own eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs can live for two hours or longer on surfaces like doorknobs, desks and tables. You cannot see germs so it is easy to pick them up without knowing it.

Here are some helpful tips to stop the spread of germs:

- If you are sick, cover your nose and mouth when you cough and/or sneeze. This will help prevent the spread of your germs to people and surfaces around you.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth since this is an easy way to get sick from other people's germs.
- Wash your hands often. Rubbing your hands together with soap and warm water for 15 to 20 seconds will help to reduce the number of germs you can spread to others.

Ask children, grandchildren and friends to practice these tips, too!

For more information on this topic, please visit the following Web site:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper>

Bird Flu

Avian influenza, also called “bird flu,” is an infection caused by a group of flu viruses that occur naturally among birds. In fact, wild birds around the world carry the viruses in their intestines but usually do not get sick. Bird flu is easily spread from one bird to another. The viruses can make domestic birds, like chickens, ducks and turkeys, very sick. In some cases, the birds can die. Bird flu is different from the human flu that occurs in the United States each winter.

One type of bird flu, called Avian influenza A or H5N1, has spread from birds to humans who live in Asia and Europe. In most cases, the virus was spread to humans who came in direct contact with infected domestic birds or

surfaces that these birds had touched. There have also been a few cases where the virus has spread from one human to another human. The H5N1 type of bird flu can cause humans to become very sick in a short amount of time. Some people who have become infected have died. As of December 2005, there have been no cases of H5N1 reported in the United States.

Some of the medicines used to treat human flu might help in treating bird flu, but more studies are needed to know for sure. Currently, there is no vaccine available to protect humans from bird flu, but scientists are working on making one.

For more information on this topic, please visit the following Web site:
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>



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