

WINTER
2025/26
EDITION

AGEING SAFELY... LATEST NEWS

Ageing Safely in the home of YOUR Choice – Ideas and Tips to maximize your Health and Wellness.

WELCOME TO THE WINTER 2025/26 NEWSLETTER

This information bulletin provides tips to be considered for a safe and healthy season.

Ageing Safely in the Home of YOUR Choice

Ideas and Tips to Customize your Home
into a Senior-Friendly Environment



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As winter persists across Canada, many older adults encounter unique challenges in staying active, maintaining social connections, and avoiding seasonal health risks. Cold temperatures, heavy snowfall, icy sidewalks, and shorter daylight hours can make it more difficult to participate in regular activities. This can lead to increased isolation, less physical activity, and a higher risk of illness or injury. The good news is, with a few simple adjustments, you can stay healthy, active, and connected throughout the season.

One simple but powerful tool for navigating the season? A consistent daily routine.

Winter routines help create structure and stability, benefiting physical and emotional health. Morning anchors like light and stretching set a positive tone for the day. Regular movement, tailored to your preferences, keeps you active and uplifts mood. Social engagement, through calls or visits, is vital for connection. Evening habits that encourage winding down lead to better rest. Consider tuning out the news, loud or highly mind triggering television for calming music at least one hour before bedtime.

Gentle, consistent routines make winter feel more manageable and comforting.

Disclaimer:

The information highlighted in this document are suggestions.

Information is widely available on the web and provided as a reference and your awareness.

Seniors' concerns and issues change over time.

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It's Cold Outside! When the temperature drops, older adults are at higher risk of weather-related health problems and injuries, including hypothermia, frostbite, and falls on ice and snow. Like most things in life, it is better to be prepared. Here are a few precautions everyone should take, especially older adults, during the winter.

Hypothermia occurs when your body temperature drops to a dangerous level. Your body temperature can drop when you are out in the cold for an extended time because it begins to lose heat quickly. Older adults are at an increased risk of hypothermia due to changes that happen to the body with ageing.

Warning Signs: cold skin that is pale or ashy; feeling very tired, confused and sleepy; feeling weak; problems walking; slowed breathing or heart rate. Call 911 if you think you or someone else has hypothermia.

Note: Shivering is not a reliable warning sign because older people tend to shiver less or not at all when their body temperature drops.

Precautions to Take

- Stay indoors (or don't stay outside for very long).
- Keep indoor temperature at 18 degrees C (65 degrees F) or warmer.
- Stay dry because wet clothing chills your body more quickly.
- Dress smart – protect your lungs from cold air. Layer up! Wearing 2 or 3 thinner layers of loose-fitting clothing is warmer than a single layer of thick clothing. Think about getting your thermals!
- Essential winter wear: hats, gloves (or preferably mittens as the fingers can touch each other), a winter coat, boots, and a scarf to cover your mouth and nose. **Note:** boots with retractable cleats or traction cleats are safer in snow and icy conditions.

Frostbite occurs when your body experiences damage to the skin that can go all the way down to the bone. Not surprisingly, extreme cold can cause frostbite. It is most likely to occur on body parts farthest away from your heart. Common places include your 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 at a higher risk.

Cover up! All parts of your body should be covered when you go out in the cold. If your skin turns red or dark or starts hurting, go inside right away.

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Know the warning signs of frostbite: skin that's white or ashy or grayish yellow; skin that feels hard or waxy; numbness. If you think you or someone else has frostbite, call for medical help immediately.

If frostbite occurs, run the affected area under warm **(not hot)** water.

Injury While Shovelling Snow

It's one of the evils of winter – snow shovelling. If you choose to shovel, take some precautions. Remember, when it's cold outside, your heart works double time to keep you warm. Strenuous activities like shovelling snow may put too much strain on your heart, especially if you have heart disease. Shovelling can also be dangerous if you have problems with balance or have “thin bones” (osteoporosis).

Ask your healthcare provider whether shovelling or other work in the snow is safe for you.

Falls

It is easy to slip and fall in the winter, especially in icy and snowy conditions.

Precautions to Take

- Make sure steps and walkways are clear before you walk. Be especially careful if you see wet pavements that could be iced over.
- Clear away snow and salt your walkways at home or hire someone to do it.
- Wear boots with non-skid soles – this will prevent you from slipping. As mentioned above, cleats are a much safer option.
- If you use a cane, replace the rubber tip before it wears smooth. Consider purchasing a cane 5-prong tip attachment for increased security.

Fires and Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

During the winter months, it is common to use the fireplace or other heating sources, such as natural gas, kerosene, and other fuels. Unless fireplaces, wood and gas stoves and gas appliances are properly vented, cleaned, and used, they can leak dangerous amounts of carbon monoxide—a deadly gas that you cannot see or smell. These and other appliances, such as space heaters, can also be fire hazards.

Warning Signs:

- Headache, Weakness, Nausea or Vomiting, Dizziness, Confusion, Blurred vision, Loss of consciousness.

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If you think you may have carbon monoxide poisoning, get into fresh air and get medical care immediately.

Precautions to Take

- Call an inspector to have your chimneys and flues cleaned – preferably annually.
- Open a window (when using a kerosene stove) – just a crack will do.
- Place smoke detectors and battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors in strategic places – especially in areas where you use fireplaces, wood stoves, or kerosene heaters.
- Make sure space heaters are at least 1 meter (3 feet) away from anything that might catch fire, such as curtains, bedding, and furniture.
- Never try to heat your home using a gas stove, charcoal grill, or other stoves not made for home heating.

For a small fire, utilize the fire extinguisher that you have already positioned at least 3 meters (9 feet) or a fire blanket. (In case of a major fire, leave the house and call 911).

Accidents While Driving

Studies have found that crash rates for older drivers, especially those over 75, are higher than rates for all drivers and similar to those of very young drivers (aged 16 to 19)

Winter is an especially important time to be vigilant when driving because road conditions and weather may not be optimal.

Precautions to Take

- Your car should have been “Winterized” by now. If not, then do not procrastinate and make an appointment TODAY! This means having the antifreeze, winter tires, and windshield wipers checked and changed if necessary.
- Remember to bring your cell phone when you drive in bad weather, and always let someone know where you are going and when you should be expected back.
- Avoid driving on icy roads and be especially careful when driving on overpasses or bridges. Consider alternate routes, even if it means driving a longer distance, if the more direct route is less safe.
- Often, main roads are cleared of snow better than secondary roads.
- Stock your car with basic emergency supplies such as:
 - First Aid Kit, Blankets, Extra Warm Clothes, Booster Cables, Extra Windshield Liquid And Scraper, Compact Shovel, Rock Salt Or A Bag Of Sand Or Cat Litter (In Case Your Wheels Get Stuck),

Water And Dried Food Or Canned Food (With Can Opener!), Flashlight (Check Battery Strength), Map Or Enable GPS On Your Phone (If Travelling In New Areas)

Staying active indoors

Regular movement is key to maintaining strength, balance, and overall well-being during winter. Even if you're unable to get outside as often as you'd like, there are plenty of ways to stay active from the comfort of your home:

- Chair yoga and stretching to improve flexibility and circulation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jP9zpiOe85M> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfsBBXqz6Tg>
- Strength training with resistance bands to maintain muscle mass - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hI5xPY6Enk>
- Online fitness classes designed for older adults include exercises like low-impact aerobics and tai chi.

Support your immune system and overall health

Cold and flu season, combined with the challenges of winter, make it essential to take extra care of your health. Here are a few tips to help optimize your winter wellness:

- Eat foods rich in vitamin D (such as fatty fish, eggs, or fortified dairy products) to compensate for reduced sunlight.
- Incorporate immune-boosting foods like citrus fruits, leafy greens, nuts, and lean proteins.
- Get your flu shot and consider additional vaccines, such as those for pneumonia and COVID-19 boosters.
- Wash your hands frequently to minimize the spread of germs. Use sanitizers when in public areas, such as grocery stores and places where you shop.
- Use a humidifier indoors to prevent dry skin and respiratory discomfort.

Staying Connected for Your Mental Well-being

Winter can feel isolating, but maintaining social connections is essential for mental health. Older adults can stay engaged with loved ones by:

- Scheduling regular calls or video chats with family and friends.
- Joining a virtual or local book club, discussion group, or hobby classes.
- Attending community events—many cities offer winter-friendly programs, such as indoor walking clubs or senior social groups.

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- Volunteering or participating in online community support programs.

Medical Conditions and Cold Weather

Older adults are more likely to have chronic medical conditions that make it harder to stay warm:

- Diabetes can prevent blood from flowing normally, reducing warmth.
- Thyroid problems may affect the body's ability to maintain a normal temperature.
- Parkinson's disease and arthritis can make it difficult to add clothing, use blankets, or move out of the cold.
- Memory problems may cause a person to forget to take precautions, like wearing appropriate clothing
- Some medications can also impact body heat, including both prescription and over-the-counter drugs, such as certain cold medicines.

Ask your doctor if any medications you take could affect your body heat and what steps you can take.

Keep Emergency Information Accessible

Having easy access to emergency contacts and important medical information is vital. Consider carrying an ID with critical information at home and when you travel. This could include medications you take, allergies, and contact numbers for family or healthcare providers.

Senior living information is posted regularly on the blog.

<https://www.jeanfrancoispinsonnault.com/blog>

Except for “Lasting Touch”, books benefit from a 10% discount, including shipping in Canada. <https://www.jeanfrancoispinsonnault.com/shop> and enter promo code: Winter
