Your Resources

Cold Weather Energy Tips

Winter is upon us! For many seniors, particularly those on a fixed budget, the costs of maintaining a comfortable temperature in the home can be overwhelming. Having a properly maintained, energy efficient home will help save money on your utility bills. Here are some tips to help you maintain a comfortable home without breaking the bank.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), inadequate insulation and air leakage are leading causes of energy waste in most homes.

- Check the amount of insulation you have in your home. Insulation is measured in thermal resistance, or R-values. The higher the R-value, the higher the insulating value. In Georgia, attics should have an R-value of 49, floors should have an R-value of 25, and walls should have an R-value of 18.

- The easiest place to add more insulation is in the attic. You should also make certain that other areas of your home, including finished attic spaces, exterior walls, and floors above crawl spaces and other unheated areas have adequate insulation.

- Check the accessible areas of your home’s ductwork to make certain that all connections are connected and tight. Insulate ductwork that travels through unheated spaces.

- Use an insulation blanket for your water heater. Be sure to follow the manufacturer’s instructions, and keep the blanket away from the thermostat and gas valves. Be aware that you may void the warranty on the water heater if the blanket obscures product labeling. In this case, you may wish to cut out an area of the blanket to reveal pertinent information.

- Close the damper on the fireplace when not in use.

Weatherize your home to prevent energy loss. Simple things you can do to
weatherize your home include:

• Fix broken windows.
• Use existing storm windows or make storm windows using plastic sheeting. Plastic sheeting kits are available from hardware and home supply stores.
• Look for holes and cracks in walls, floors, and ceilings, and around doors, windows, plumbing fixtures, light switches, and recessed lights. Holes, cracks, and unsealed areas may allow air cold air to come in and warm air to escape.
• Check the caulking and weather-stripping around doors and windows. Replace cracked or crumbling caulk, and flattened or peeling weather-stripping.
• Check to make certain that doors and windows are closed tightly. Do this by taking a piece of paper and closing the door or window onto it. Try to remove the paper. If you can remove it, the door or window does not have a tight fit.

Set the thermostat to 68° while you are at home, and lower it while you are away. An easy way to ensure that the thermostat is automatically raised or lowered to suit comings and goings is to install a programmable thermostat. A programmable thermostat will automatically adjust itself to pre-programmed settings. Alternatively, you can simply remember to lower the thermostat before you leave, and turn it up once you get home.

Maintain your heating and cooling system to prevent problems in the future.
• A checkup on the home’s heating and cooling system performed by a qualified professional can save you money by preventing future problems.
• A simple thing you can do to help maintain your heating and cooling system is to change the air filters located in the home’s ductwork on a regular basis. A dirty filter is not as efficient as a clean one; a dirty filter can also lead to system failure.
• Be aware that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) states that ventless heaters should never be used in homes with children or elderly residents. Also, the DOE states that ventless heaters should never be used in mobile homes or trailers.

Unsure of how to maximize your home’s energy savings? You may want to consider having an energy audit performed on your home. An energy audit performed by a qualified professional may help you determine exactly how you can make energy improvements to your home. Besides working to save you energy and money, the best thing about an energy audit is that it may be a service offered by your local utility, at no cost. Contact your local utility for more information.

Remember, when assessing your home’s energy needs, be sure to use a “whole house” approach. That means examining the entire home to determine the best and most efficient ways to save energy – and money!

Your Relationships

Grandfathers Are Special

In recent years, the term “grandfather” has taken on new meanings. Not many years ago, the life expectancy of men was such that few children had the opportunity to spend many years with their grandfathers, particularly as they grew into adolescence and adulthood. However, as life expectancy has increased, more grandparents are living to see their grandchildren grow up, and even watching their grandchildren have children of their own.

Researchers have found that grandchildren who have a close relationship with a grandfather are more likely to do well in school, display positive emotional adjustment, have higher self-esteem, and develop and maintain friendships. As well, grandfathers who report having close relationships with grandchildren describe the significant joy they experience as a result of the love they feel for their grandchildren. Spending time with their grandchildren and displaying photographs of them provides reminders of their connection to future generations.

Grandfather Contributions

Although the grandfather role and the grandfather-grandchild relationship change over time, researchers have revealed how grandparents provide a variety of unique contributions and benefits to their grandchildren’s lives.

Sounding Board

Grandfathers have lots of wisdom and life experience from which to draw. They have seen lots of events and changes come and go. Even their mistakes can have a positive purpose. Because grandfathers generally do not have disciplinary and parenting responsibilities, grandchildren tend to be more relaxed, more open to sharing, and may ask more thoughtful questions of their grandfathers. A grandfather's point of view, based on years of experience, can help guide, inform, and influence the growth and development of his grandchildren.

Value Development

Grandfathers can have a powerful influence on their grandchildren by teaching about perseverance, loyalty, hard work, patience, and sacrifice from their many life stories. Grandfathers have lived through wars, hard times, cultural changes, and technological revolutions and may tell their stories in a lively, engaging way that allows the story to do the teaching. For those grandfathers who may not feel they have much to tell from their own life experiences, sharing simple stories about how they grew up and lessons they learned in life can help grandchildren to recognize and appreciate the generations who have gone before them. While stories may cause grandchildren to think about personal values, a grandfather's actions are important too. Grandchildren are observers, and they can learn powerful, lasting lessons from watching a grandfather go through life with a sense of
humor, dignity, and generosity.

**Strong Sense of Family**

Grandfathers are living links between the generations; they help grandchildren become familiar with extended family members, either in person or through photographs and stories. In today's world, schooling and jobs frequently separate families geographically, leading many grandchildren to lose their sense of connection to a family support network. Grandchildren frequently want to know and learn about their family heritage, to have a sense of connection to the past, and to understand their unique place in their family's history. Grandfathers can help bring their grandchildren and extended family together so that the younger generations have opportunities to see and hear how different ages relate positively to one another.

**Connecting With Grandchildren**

Connecting with grandchildren is the first step to achieving a satisfying grandfather-grandchild relationship. Ideas for connecting to grandchildren include:

- Call or e-mail your grandchildren just to say hello.
- Learn more about computers and the Internet together with your grandchildren.
- Get out the photo albums and share stories of your past.
- Visit the library with your grandchildren and do some genealogical research.
- Show respect for your grandchildren's parents. Avoid offering unsolicited advice.
- Spend one-to-one time with a grandchild, teaching him or her a skill you have (i.e., woodworking, music, fishing, painting, etc.).

In summary, grandfathers are role models. They are the bearers of their family’s history and values. They can light the way for their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren by offering loving and supportive parenting. Most of the time they are able to act as caring companions for their grandchildren where they can lavish love and attention without getting bogged down in the duties of parenthood. Finally, they can strengthen family bonds by sharing, with their own children, the joy they take in their grandchildren.

Adapted from Ohio State University Extension and AARP

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**Your Health**

**Walking Helps Your Body and Your Mind**

A real concern for all of us as we grow older is keeping our minds sharp. It is well known that physical activity benefits our bodies, but recent research shows that even mild, regular exercise helps keep our minds keen as we grow older.

Two recent studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association studied the effects of walking on a regular basis on mental functioning in
older men and women.

One study of over 2200 men in Hawaii aged 71-93 years found that the more men walked, the less likely they were to develop dementia, or a loss of mental functioning. Men who walked at least 2 hours a day were 80% less likely to develop dementia than those who walked less than 1/4 mile per day. The men were followed for 6-8 years to determine who developed dementia.

Another study of over 16,000 women aged 70 to 81 years looked at the effect of physical activity on cognitive function, including learning and memory, which may be a marker for later dementia. Women who were moderately physically active had significantly better scores on learning and memory tests than less active women. The most active women also showed less decline in cognitive function over a 2-year period than less active women. The benefits were seen not only in women who exercised vigorously — walking the equivalent of 1.5 hours per week at an easy pace was also associated with better cognitive scores.

Walking is the most common and most practical type of activity among older adults. However, other types of physical activity for those who are unable to walk may have similar protective effects against loss of mental functioning. The most physically active women in this study were also less likely to have problems with balance and fatigue, and were less likely to have heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes.

Other factors that can affect mental functioning as we age include disease, environment, genetics and nutrition. It is uncertain why exercise helps keep the mind sharp. Experts believe it may be that physical activity helps the brain by keeping blood vessels health or helping brain cells directly.

Regular physical activity is important in the prevention and treatment of many chronic diseases like high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. Now, there’s another reason why staying physically active is an important goal for all of us.

**Quick and Easy Vegetable Soup**

8 oz. extra lean ground beef  
46 oz low sodium V-8 juice  
16 oz. bag of frozen mixed vegetables  
1/4 cup pearled barley

2. Add juice, vegetables and barley.  
3. Bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 45 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Serve hot with low fat crackers, whole wheat bread or corn muffins. Freezes well for later use. Makes 6 servings.

**Exchanges:** 1 starch, 2 vegetables, 1 medium-fat meat

**Nutrition Information:**

- Calories: 230  
- Carbohydrate: 27 grams  
- Protein: 12 grams  
- Fat: 8 grams  
- Cholesterol: 24 milligrams  
- Sodium: 186 milligrams  
- Fiber: 7 grams
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Dear Friend:

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Please contact your local Extension Service office for more information on these and related topics.

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