Hypothermia – Too Cold!

Hypothermia occurs when your body loses heat faster than it can be produced. Senior citizens and infants are most at risk from the cold. Be sure a family member or neighbor checks in on older adults, especially in cold weather. It is important to know that hypothermia can happen even when the temperature outside is not very cold. If you are in wet clothes or in windy conditions, even with temperatures in the 50’s, your body can become too cold.

Be aware of the symptoms of hypothermia:

- **Shivering** – for any person of any age, shivering is the first sign you are losing body heat. Do not ignore shivering and go indoors if possible.
- **For older adults**: exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness.
- **For infants**: bright red, cold skin and very low energy. You can help an infant stay warm by holding the baby close and using your own body heat.

Avoiding hypothermia and hyperthermia

Taking care of you and your family is important in both extreme heat and extreme cold. Two potential issues you may face are hypothermia (your body becomes too cold) and hyperthermia (your body becomes too hot).

During the hottest summer months and coldest winter months, be sure to check on older friends, family and neighbors who may have trouble dealing with the extreme temperatures. Here are some simple suggestions to help you avoid temperature related illnesses.
If you or someone you know is suffering from hypothermia, go to a heated space as soon as possible. Heat the core of the body first: the chest, neck, head and groin areas. An electric blanket is most helpful for this! Drink warm, not hot, liquids like broth or sugary drinks like hot chocolate or cider. Do not drink alcohol to warm up! If your body temperature is 95° or lower, seek medical attention immediately!

**Hyperthermia – Too Hot!**

Hyperthermia is when your body becomes too hot. Hundreds of people die each year from hyperthermia and most are over 50 years old. There are three major heat illnesses. Do not ignore the symptoms, as the illnesses can become increasingly more serious.

- **Heat Cramps** – This is a sign your body is too hot. Slow down, cool down and drink fluids.
- **Heat Exhaustion** – This is your body’s response to losing a lot of water and salt. Symptoms include lots of sweating, paleness, muscle cramps, tiredness and dizziness.
- **Heat Stroke** – This is the most severe medical issue! You will need to seek medical attention immediately if you have the following symptoms: Your body temperature is above 103°, your skin is red, hot and dry (no sweating), a throbbing headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion and unconsciousness.

Your body is always working to balance how much heat it makes and how much it loses. Too much heat causes sweating, which evaporates on your skin and helps keep the body cool.
- If you do not have air conditioning in your home, try to go to an air conditioned space for a few hours a day. Try a public library, the movies, the local mall or a senior center.
- Wear light colored, loose clothing and drink plenty of fluids (not alcohol) throughout the day. Keep your curtains or blinds closed during the hottest part of the day.

For more information contact your local county Extension office or call 1-800-ASK-UGA1