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SENIOR HEALTH

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# Hypothermia

## A COLD-RELATED DANGER

Hypothermia occurs when your body temperature drops below 96° F. Anyone who's exposed to severe cold without enough protection can develop hypothermia. Older people may not notice the cold as easily and can develop hypothermia even after exposure to mild cold. Certain medications, medical conditions or the consumption of alcohol can also make people more susceptible to the cold.

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### **SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHERMIA**

*slow or irregular speech*  
*shallow or very slow breathing*  
*fatigue*  
*confusion*  
*slow pulse*  
*weakness or drowsiness*  
*shivering*  
*cold, pale skin*

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### **TREATMENT**

- Rewarming only under a doctor's supervision.

### **COLD WEATHER PRECAUTIONS**

- Dress warmly even when indoors. Wear a warm hat and shoes.
- Eat plenty of food.
- Stay as active as possible.
- Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages.
- Keep warm in bed with enough clothing and blankets.
- If you're taking medications for treatment of anxiety, nervousness or nausea, ask your doctor if it might affect your body temperature.
- Ask friends and neighbors to look in on you once or twice a week. Your community may have a telephone check-in service for the elderly or housebound.