



## Cold and the Elderly

Do any of your elderly relatives live where it's cold? If so, you may want to make sure precautions are taken to avoid hypothermia, a potentially serious condition in which body temperature drops and stays low.

Hypothermia is a particular problem for older people. If you suspect someone may have hypothermia, look for the “*umbles*”—*stumbles, mumbles, fumbles and grumbles*—these show that the cold is affecting how well a person's muscles and nerves work, according to the National Institute on Aging. Hypothermia is a particular problem for older people who lack proper nutrition, take certain medications, drink alcohol, or who have conditions such as arthritis, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and Parkinson's disease. If hypothermia is suspected:

- The person's temperature should be taken;
- If the temperature doesn't rise above 96° F, 911 should be called;
- While waiting for help to arrive, the person should be kept warm and dry;
- If possible, the person should be moved to a warmer place and wrapped in blankets, towels, coats—whatever is handy. Even the body warmth of another person will help. You may be tempted to rub the person's arms and legs but be gentle. The skin of an older person may be thin and easily damaged.