

PRESS RELEASE

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Cold Weather Tips for Older Adults and Caregivers

RICHMOND, VA December 8, 2016 Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging encourages families, friends and neighbors to check on older adults during the cold and inclement weather period. "It is especially important to check on individuals who live alone," according to Thelma B. Watson, Executive Director for Senior Connections. "The best way that we can help is to check on the well-being of older adults and make sure they have food, medications, heat and other necessities. Also, we can share cold weather tips with our loved ones," added Dr. Watson.

Older adults can lose body heat. In addition, some health problems and medications can make it harder for older adults to stay warm. In extreme cold weather, older adults are at greater risk of developing hypothermia, a condition where the body's temperature drops below 95 degrees Fahrenheit due to excessive exposure to cold, either indoors or outside. Low body temperature can cause heart attack, kidney problems, liver damage and sometimes death. Symptoms of hypothermia include slow or slurred speech, incoherence, memory loss, drowsiness and uncontrollable shivering. If a person's temperature is below 95 degrees Fahrenheit, immediate medical attention is needed.

These tips can help reduce risks for hypothermia:

- ❖ Stock up on nonperishable foods
- ❖ Check supply of prescription medications to make sure enough are available
- ❖ Keep needed telephone numbers nearby in case of an emergency such as loss of power, heat, or running water or in case of a fall or accident
- ❖ Have an emergency plan in case there is no electricity or telephone service
- ❖ In extremely cold temperatures, stay indoors and limit time outside; cold weather puts a strain on the heart even without exertion
- ❖ Dress warmly wearing layers to insulate the body from the cold; wear a hat outdoors to prevent loss of body heat through the head and cover the mouth with a scarf to protect the lungs from cold air
- ❖ Sleep under several lightweight blankets instead of one heavy blanket
- ❖ Take precautions to avoid falls on ice or slippery walkways; ask a neighbor or friend to help clear walkways when needed

To learn more about Senior Connections' programs and services for older adults, caregivers and persons with disabilities, please visit our website www.seniorconnections-va.org or call **804-343-3000**.

For additional information on healthy aging please visit the National Institute on Aging (NIA) website www.nia.nih.gov or call NIA's toll-free number: 1-800-222-2225.

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About the National Institute on Aging: The NIA leads the federal government effort conducting and supporting research on aging and the health and well-being of older people. The Institute's broad scientific program seeks to understand the nature of aging and to extend the healthy, active years of life.

Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization governed by a Board of Directors. The Agency, established in 1973 as part of a nationwide network of Area Agencies on Aging, provides direct services, information and referral, education and advocacy for seniors and caregivers residing in the City of Richmond and the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan.