



Staying Safe This Winter

January in Minnesota is not for the weak. Even with an unusually warm start this year, we are still sure to get plenty of snow, ice and frigid temperatures as we move into 2016. While wintertime offers plenty of reasons to cozy up near a fireplace with a hot cup of coffee, it also is full of dangers and potential accidents. Your aging loved ones may be at a higher risk for winter-related illness, accidents, or isolation. To set you and your aging friends up for success, check out our five favorite tips for staying safe – and sane - this season.

Keep Germs at Bay

Late fall ushers in cold and flu season. Winter temperatures keep people inside, windows closed, and germs multiplying like crazy. The flu can be extra dangerous for those over the age of 65; a small cough can quickly turn into acute bronchitis or pneumonia, essentially guaranteeing an unplanned hospital stay. This year, talk to your geriatrician about the benefits and contradictions of a flu shot for your



particular conditions and health. Beyond protecting yourself with appropriate vaccinations, remember to revert back to good health practices. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water. Cover your mouth with your elbow (not your hands) when you sneeze or cough. Politely decline invitations if you are feeling sick. Drink lots of water. Keep yourself healthy this winter by ditching the germs and not getting sick in the first place.

Manage Illness

If you do find yourself ill, be sure to take care of yourself so that your cough or fever doesn't progress into something worse. Drink plenty of fluids and don't forget to rest. Cancel any of your obligations so that you can take it easy at home, and don't wait to head to the doctor, especially if you have a fever, decrease appetite, or other troublesome symptoms. Your doctor can provide antibiotics for a treatable illness, or antivirals for influenza, if you come in soon after symptoms begin. Your doctor can also help you with symptom management like offering a cough

suppressant or fever reducer. Call your family, friends, or [our Visiting Angles office](#) to ask for additional assistance, wellbeing checks, or food preparation.



Prevent Slips

Beyond preventing the spread of germs while staying indoors, the winter is also prime slip and trip season as you head outside into the elements. Don't try to navigate slick surfaces, like sidewalks or porch steps, alone. Enlist the assistance of a residential snow and ice removal company, your friends, or your caregivers to remove snow and ice prior to you heading outside. Hold on to sturdy railings or a friend's arm as you walk outside to your car or other destination. Be especially vigilant at community stops – like the grocery store or library – for hidden ice or tricky patches of snow. Park nearby or ask your caregiver to drop you off close to the entrance before she parks the car.

Know Your Emergency Plan

As in any season, it is important to be sure that you are confident of what to do in case of an emergency. Take a moment to update any emergency contact information, such as cell phone numbers of your family members, and your medical information, such as current prescriptions and doctor office information. Know who to call if you fall, if your power goes out, or if you are feeling sick. The more prepared you feel, the better you will be able to get the help you need if an emergency does occur this winter.

Get Out of the House

Finally, don't let the winter weather keep you inside and isolated. Lack of social interaction can lead to loneliness, depression, and even cognitive decline in seniors. While your social calendar might look a little less busy due to wintery conditions, make it a priority to get out of the house (or invite friends over to your home) at least a few times per week. If you can't make it out or your friends can't make it to you, give them a call on the phone or Skype with your family. Social connection is imperative as we age, especially in the winter months when it takes everything we have to get the motivation to head out into the elements.

This winter, [we would love to offer you companionship and assistance](#). Don't wait until an emergency happens to contact us; we want to start building our relationship this season! Here's to a happy and healthy winter for all of us.

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