

TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Village Out-Patient Clinic

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WINTER'S ALMOST HERE!

by Barbara Chenoweth, NP

As we come into the month of November and the weather turns cooler, it's hard not to dread another New England winter. One of the most difficult consequences of winter and its resulting drop in temperatures is the impact of cold weather on our bodies and our outdoor activities. The cold can affect our ability to exercise outside, our willingness to travel, our fear of falling, or simply our comfort outdoors. How can we best cope and compensate for the realities of cold weather and not have it interfere adversely with our lives?

One of the greatest problems in winter is dry skin, the most common cause of itchy skin. Dry skin occurs when the skin doesn't retain enough moisture. This is a big problem in the winter when the humidity is low both outdoors and indoors. Older skin also tends to be dry, and at least 75% of older people have dry skin. Begin these routines now, before the coolest weather arrives:

- ◆ Take warm, not hot, baths and showers; spend less than 10 minutes bathing
- ◆ Wash gently, limit soap on the face and avoid perfumed and deodorant soaps; use Dove or Cetaphil
- ◆ Pat the skin dry, avoid rubbing
- ◆ Moisturize after bathing using a product that lists petroleum as one of the top three ingredients; glycerin, lactic acid or urea are also good moisturizing ingredients
- ◆ Use a humidifier when the air is dry
- ◆ Cover exposed skin when outdoors
- ◆ Severe, itchy skin may require a consult with a dermatologist

(*Mayo Clinic Health Letter*, July 2013)

Don't forget your hands! Cold weather can cause very dry hands with fissures or cracks in the fingers. These can become painful and a possible source of infections. Hands need to be moisturized after washing, even if it means every time the hands are washed! Aquaphor is an excellent hand moisturizer that contains petroleum but isn't as greasy as petroleum jelly. Begin taking care of your hands now! As soon as the weather turns cooler, wear gloves, and as the temperatures fall, wear heavier gloves all the time outdoors.

Fear of falling is another major concern when winter approaches. Preventing falls is a year-long project. It involves taking vitamin D supplements, at least 1,000 units per day, and exercise. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), a federal panel of experts, recommends both for people over 65 years, citing data that showed these interventions reduced the chances of falling by 13 to 17%, (*John Hopkins Health After 50*, September 2012). The USPSTF recommends:

- ◆ 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity, like walking, dancing or water aerobics, each week
- ◆ Muscle strengthening activities, such as weight training or yoga, twice a week
- ◆ Balance training, like Tai Chi or balance exercises, three or more times a week for people who are at increased risk of falling.

Because of cold and snowy weather, people are more cautious about walking outside. Nonetheless, many do walk their dogs, take walks or go to the grocery store in snowy or icy conditions. When the temperature is below 20 degrees with



wind chills of 30 miles per hour, the temperature could be as low as -20 degrees, a dangerous temperature for walkers. On warmer winter days, dressing in layers is important, beginning with a lightweight synthetic or polyester material next to the skin. The next layer should be wool or polyester fleece, and the outer layer should be lighter but water-repellent to help stay dry. Since 50% of body heat is lost from an uncovered head, wearing a hat is essential. In cold weather the body will shunt the blood away from the extremities to keep the internal organs warm, so wearing gloves is a must. And finally, consider a loose layer to protect your face and mouth so that frigid air is not inhaled; this protects the lungs. (*The Boston Globe*, January 9, 2012)

Even indoors, in the summer, many older people find that they are always cold. So winter is an especially difficult time of the year for keeping warm. This may be due to the natural slowing of the body's metabolism as we age, as well as to the body's lessening efficiency at generating heat and maintaining temperature. Some medical conditions, such as low thyroid and heart disease, can make the body more susceptible to feeling cold. As a result, *Johns Hopkins Health After 50* (January 2011) recommends eating a full meal before going outside, as the energy from food helps to generate heat. Wearing warm, layered clothing, a hat, scarf and gloves will prevent the loss of heat. While warm drinks help warm up the body, alcohol should be avoided because it causes us to shed heat.

Wearing sturdy, warm shoes keeps the body warm as well as lowers the risk of falling. It has been observed that older people tend to wear worn-out shoes that no longer fit! Before the winter wind arrives, inspect and replace shoes. Be better prepared this year for winter!

HEALTH EDUCATION LECTURE

On *Wednesday, November 6*, Eric Steinberg, NP, from the Boston University Alzheimer's Center, will give a health education lecture on "Memory Loss: When is It Serious?" Join us in Auditorium Center from 10:30 to 11:30 am.

BEDFORD POLICE DRUG PICK-UP

The Bedford Police will again pick-up expired and unused medicine on *Friday, November 8, 2013*. You can drop off any prescription or over-the-counter unused and expired medicines at the Clinic between 8:30 am and 12 noon on Friday, November 8, 2013. Unfortunately, we can only accept the medicines during these times and on the date of the pick up.

NEW HEALTH CENTER NURSE PRACITITONER

Beginning in November, Kathlyn Nowak, NP will join the medical practice of Dr. Cherie Noe and Dr. Azadeh Assarpour at the CWV Nursing Center. A graduate of Boston College and Boston University, Kathlyn has been a geriatric nurse practitioner for over 20 years and has worked with the Mt. Auburn Hospital Geriatric Outreach Services for the past eight years. Plans are in the works for a Welcome Tea for both Kathlyn and Dr. Assarpour. The details will be announced in BITS.

SATURDAY CLINIC

You will notice a new face at the Saturday Clinic. Laura Cormier will be working as the Clinic Assistant two Saturdays each month. She will also be working in several other areas at CWV. Laura has experience working in a medical office, and she has completed an Associate Degree in Psychology. We are happy to welcome her.

The Clinic will be closed on November 28, Thanksgiving Day. It will be open on Saturday, November 30 from 9 am to 12 noon, as usual. Look for any updates in BITS.

