



# Seniors Staying Safe in Extreme Weather



## What to Know as a Senior: Extreme Temperatures

In general: older adults have a harder time regulating body temperature. Importantly, being really hot or really cold can make you very sick - sometimes before you realize it. Seniors with chronic medical conditions or using certain prescription medications can be especially impacted. Talk to your doctor and make sure you are dressed right for the temperature, even if staying inside.

### Cold

- Keep living areas warm.
- Insulate windows and doors.
- Dress warmly for the day and night, even if you don't plan on going outdoors.
- Make sure to eat enough food even if you don't feel hungry.
- Wear waterproof clothing outside if snowing or raining and change out of any wet clothes as soon as you can.

### Heat

- Drink cold water and eat colder snacks, like salad or popsicles.
- Stay hydrated. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- Place rags with cold water on the back of your neck to avoid overheating.
- Keep living areas cool with air conditioning and by putting thick shades over windows.

## What to Know As a Caregiver or Relative

- Make a plan in advance of extreme weather events, including how to check in with your loved one, what they will need, and what to do in case of an evacuation. Consider medications and other health needs in any planning.
- Physical isolation can take a harsh mental toll on people during extreme weather events, so find a way to check in socially, whether a text or phone call. Follow-up with an in-person check-in when possible.
- Know the signs of overheating and hypothermia, as seniors are more likely to be affected by temperature extremes.
- Write down contact information and medical instructions on a paper and leave it somewhere easy to see and refer to.
- During extreme events, make sure your loved one has power, heat, and necessary resources.
- Seniors with memory issues may forget to wear proper attire for extreme temperatures.

# What to Know as a Senior: Storms and Other Climate Events

## Storms

- Have a plan in place with someone in your community to check-in, in case you need extra resources, heat, or equipment during a storm.
- Power outages can affect electrically-powered medical equipment and elevators. If you buy a back-up generator for the equipment, make sure to follow safety instructions, and do not operate the generator indoors.
- If possible, avoid shoveling snow, clearing drain pipes, and doing other strenuous activities before, during, or after a storm. Seniors are more susceptible to muscle strains, balance issues, and harmful falls. Enlist younger neighbors to help!

## Other Climate Events

- Extreme weather can be equally or more detrimental to your mental health than to your physical health. Prioritize your mental health in extreme weather situations.
- Extreme weather can cause isolation, interruption to medical care, and challenges in reaching medical aid. This can all create anxiety, stress, and more serious medical conditions.
- Warm weather has expanded the geographic range of ticks and other pests. Make sure to perform regular tick checks when coming in from an area with greenery outside.
- Worsening air quality, from pollution, can exacerbate respiratory issues, like asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD).

## Did you know?

Human-made climate change is putting a lot of stress on communities worldwide, by increasing the frequency of extreme weather events and their negative physical and mental health impacts. Making full preparations NOW is important to stay physically safe and happy.



**For more information, visit:**

[www.climatecrew.org](http://www.climatecrew.org)  
<https://www.cmu.edu/steinbrenner/EPA%20Factsheets/older-adults-health-climate-change.pdf>

