

Turn up heat to avoid dangers of winter's cold living spaces

Written by meg sibal, m.d.

Sunday, 15 February 2015 15:01



DURING the winter months, many of us hesitate to turn the temperature up in our homes, to keep the bills down - however, a recent study shows that not adequately heating a home can have an unforeseen effect: lower mobility and a higher risk of falls, says the February 2015 issue of the Johns Hopkins Medicine *HealthAfter 50*.

A study published in the May 2014 issue of *Age and Ageing* showed that researchers found cold environments have a disabling effect on some women by decreasing their physical performance.

In the study, women ages 70 and older were asked to sit in a warm room (77°F) and a cold room (59°F) over the course of a week.

After 45 minutes, researchers tested the participants' leg muscle power and speed, muscle strength, walking performance, grip strength and skin temperature - Result: the researchers found that women experienced a temporary, but significant loss of mobility after sitting in the colder temperature; decreases in physical performance ranged from 2 to 10 percent with only grip strength unaffected by the cold.

Although putting on warmer clothing may seem like a common sense solution, researchers noted that some older women are unlikely to perceive when they're becoming colder.

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While the performance decrease was small, it occurred after just 45 minutes - it's unknown how longer exposures to cold temperatures might further erode muscle power and function, especially in the frail.

If turning down the thermostat is a means to lower heating costs, the health letter offers these self-help measures which you can try as cost-cutting ideas:

- Turn down your water heater's temperature - Many water heaters are factory set to 140°F - a) lower yours to 120°F; b) a tank insulator sleeve can also help.
- Upgrade or insulate your windows - Use removable plastic sheeting over the interior of windows to improve energy efficiency.
- Reverse ceiling fans to help circulate warm air downward.
- Close heating vents and doors in unused rooms.
- Replace often-used incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs - they use 75 percent less energy, saving \$40 over their lifetime, concludes the health letter.

At this time, let us please have a moment of silence to say a solemn prayer for the peaceful repose of the soul of our dearly beloved friend, Bert Pelayo, who will be greatly missed by his family, relatives and friends.

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I would like to share with our readers a beautiful prayer-poem I've read on a Salvatorian memorial mass card, and I quote:

***“God looked around His garden
and found an empty place.
He then looked down upon the earth
and saw your tired face.
He put His arms around you
and lifted you to rest.
God’s garden must be beautiful;
He always takes the best.
He saw the road was getting rough,
and the hills were hard to climb,
so He closed your weary eyelids □
and whispered, ‘Peace be thine.’
It broke our hearts to lose you, but
you didn’t go alone,
for part of us went with you
the day God called you home.”***