

# Winter Tips for Seniors

Winter Weather Reminders for the Over 55 Crowd



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Many seniors live alone and that independence is important but winter weather can be a challenge for us. Weather forecasts have been known to be wrong or ignored, so we need to be prepared for whatever winter brings.

I'm a senior, my fiercely independent mother is even more so. Here is a list of things I remind her of every winter.

1. Dress warmly when going outside, even it's just for a few minutes to fill the bird feeders. Button your coat, wear boots, gloves, and something on your head.
2. Put the cordless phone or cell phone in your pocket when going outside. It takes just a minute to stick it in a pocket and if you should happen to fall you can phone for help.
3. Keep the melting salt near the front door. It's too heavy to drag around. Use a decorative can if you think the bag looks tacky. Be sure there is something to use as a scoop.
4. Keep the snow shovel inside or, if you insist on it being outside, be sure it's within arm's reach of the door.
5. Push the snow to the side of the porch, don't lift and toss it off. You just need to clear a path.
6. Hold on to the railing when going down the steps. Sprinkle salt on it if it's icy.

7. Don't turn the thermostat below 65 degrees and risk hypothermia. Frugal is one thing, freezing is another.
8. Is the propane tank full? (For those of you who use oil, is your tank full?)
9. Is there wood for the fireplace? Is it on the deck, covered, or clear across the yard? Keep a few pieces inside so they'll be good and dry.
10. Has the fireplace been cleaned?
11. Do you have extra batteries for the flashlights? Do you know where they are? And the flashlight?
12. Plenty of drinking water on hand? A few extra gallons, just in case?
13. Food... is there enough for three to five days in case you're snowed in?
14. Prescription medications... remember to keep a weeks supply on hand. Refill before you run out.
15. If the weather looks iffy, don't drive if you don't have to. Be sure to put a blanket or two in the car.
16. Will you consider getting a cell phone so I can reach you if you do decide to drive?
17. Canes. My mom doesn't use a can but maybe yours does. Replace the rubber tip if it's worn. An ice pick, found at health care stores or pharmacies, can be fitted to the end of the cane for added stability in icy weather.

While many of these tips are common sense, some of us older people have trouble accepting that we may not be able to do what we did last year. Don't treat the seniors in your life as if they're old, infirm, and forgetful even if they are. Take a light and caring approach when reminding them of winter hazards. And phone them every day, especially when severe weather is expected.