



Caregiver Tip of the Month – January 2012

Notes from Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

Cold weather safety for older adults

Winter has finally hit us! Two winter issues for older adults are 1) how to pay for escalating utility bills, and 2) how to insure safety in cold weather.

Just getting cold can endanger lives. Trying to keep thermostats low to save on heat bills has gotten some folks in trouble because seniors are more susceptible to hypothermia. Some medicines cause your body to get cold before you realize it. Hypothermia happens by mistake and it may be hard to tell if someone has it. Early signs include cold feet /hands, puffy face, pale skin, slurring words, acting sleepy, being angry or confused; may or may not include shivering. Later signs include trouble walking or being clumsy, stiff and jerky arm or leg movements, slow heartbeat that is not regular, slow shallow breathing, and blacking out. Call 911 if you think someone has warning signs of hypothermia.

Some assistance for limited-income families include:

- Heating assistance programs: LIHEAP – Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. March application deadline for the following winter, but some emergency assistance available. Contact Community Action Partnership in CdA – (208) 664-8757.
- Weatherization program can help make your home more energy efficient. Apply to Community Action Partnership to determine eligibility. – (208) 664-8757.
- Utility assistance: 1)“no-cut-off” for disabled during winter. 2)monthly budget plan to even out energy payments, 3)energy conservation info. Contact Avista Cares Program: 769-1324.
- Energy Star symbol products are energy efficient and can save up to 1/3 on energy costs.

Contact Betsy Bullard, Area Agency on Aging, at 667-3179, ext. 222, or email infoassist@aaani.org to find out more about these topics and other resources or visit our website at www.aaani.org.