

## **Winter Weather Tips**

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Extreme heat is the biggest concern for persons living with Myasthenia Gravis but extreme cold can be just as much of an issue. Remember - - how each person reacts to temperatures varies drastically. Your body's natural reaction to shiver when cold is the main concern. The action of shivering fatigues your muscles. To avoid muscle fatigue, consider the following:

- 1) Keep your home at a comfortable temperature. If you have another family member who tends to adjust thermostat, there needs to be some compromise. If they are cold, ask them to wear a house coat or other forms of warm home clothing. Maybe designate certain rooms that are to be comfortable for you and those you share your living space with. Common areas that must be shared should stay at approximately 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2) Dress in layers - - try and keep your core temperature around 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Rather than putting on a bunch of bulky clothes, layer so that if you start to get too warm and fatigue yourself you can strip off a layer to cool yourself. Make sure you wear a warm hat that covers your ears, most of your body's heat escapes from the top of your head.
- 3) If it is raining or snowing outside, make sure you are wearing shoes with good traction. Wear brightly colored clothes and reflectors when possible. Remember that heavy snow muffles the normal sounds you expect to hear that alert you to oncoming vehicles. If you use a cane or walker, make sure the rubber tip still has tread and has not been worn smooth and need to be replaced.
- 4) Be mindful of the surfaces you are walking on and try to avoid the icy and snowy patches. There could be ice underneath the snow. If there is no clear path for you to take and must walk through snow, take your time, don't rush. Try to stay on the sidewalk, if you must step off the curb, stay as close to the edge of the street as possible. Hazardous driving conditions may keep motorists from stopping on time or braking effectively.
- 5) Avoid going out on days where there is a 'Winter Weather Advisory'. You need to ask yourself "at what temperature do I begin to shiver?"
- 6) When getting into cars, make sure you have allowed them to warm up. You don't want it sweltering, but you don't want to start your trip shivering and tiring yourself out before you get to your destination.
- 7) Perform strenuous activities during peak medication times. Mestinon starts to work within the first 15 minutes and peaks between 1 and 1 ½ hours and is out of your system in 3-4 hours.
- 8) Schedule rest periods while shopping, or try shopping online. If you plan on baking, try to mix the dough in the morning, rest, and then bake in the afternoon. Remember that stress can affect your symptoms, so be kind to yourselves, don't get run down to the point you can't enjoy the holidays!

9) Plan when and learn how to safely shovel snow. Check with your doctor about such strenuous exercise before shoveling. Use common sense when doing outside activities. You might feel good being outside and not realize that you have over done things. Try and get someone to do this kind of work for you such as a family member, friend, or the neighbor boy looking for a quick buck.

10) Use rock salt, sand, or another chemical de-icing compound to keep steps, walkways, and driveways free of ice.

11) Carry Antibacterial soaps or cloths with you. You never know where germs are lurking. They could be on the handle of a shopping cart or in a public bathroom.

12) Flu shots and Pneumonia vaccines - - Be aware that some flu shots contain a live virus and must be avoided by those with Auto-immune disorders! Live vaccines are more likely to cause you to become ill. Also, if you are on immunosuppressant's this may increase your chances experiencing flu like symptoms. Illness from the flu shot usually presents itself around 1-2 weeks after vaccination. If you have recently experienced an increase in your MG symptoms, **consult with your Neurologist prior to getting a flu shot.** The pneumonia shot is not a live vaccine and is not normally a problem with your MG, however if you are allergic to eggs be sure to tell the person administering the shot.

13) If you do become ill seek attention early. Some antibiotics, a necessary evil, could affect your MG. You may experience an increase in your symptoms that will go away a few weeks after you stop taking the antibiotics. As with any medication, you should always notify your neurologist when a new medication has been added or changed.

14) Even though you may be tempted to enjoy a hot shower or bath - - **don't! Very hot**

**steamy water** can zap your strength and leave you weak, and you may have difficulty getting out of the tub. Always use warm tepid water.

15) Don't forget to take time to relax with something warm to drink and enjoy the beauty that the cold weather brings. A snowflake, an icicle, a child's little red cheeks can bring a sense of wonder to us all.

Remember that using common sense during extreme weather; be it hot or cold, is your best defense.

Referenced material:

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/14438-winter-safety-tips-for-seniors/#ixzz1YcPMgRWP>

<http://www.carefocuscompanion.com/cold-weather-safety-tips-for-seniors/>