

Caregiver E-Visit

Safety and Sanity in Wisconsin Winter

It came on a dark and chilly evening, that first snowfall of the season. I hoisted myself out of my chair, loaded up with warm layers, and grumbled to my dog as I went out in the cold darkness. I moved my shovel along with tired, stiff muscles wondering how many times this winter I'd have to do this interminable chore. I thought of long winters past with snowbanks overhead, freezing rain, drab fog, aches and pains, weariness, and a sense of gloom and doom. I assured myself that this horrid season would last forever. As I shoveled, I grew more and more morose! "By the time I finish this chore", I thought, "I'll just fall into bed, exhausted and disheartened. I hope I sleep until spring!" That gave me the idea I should come up with some winter survival tips for caregivers reading the next E-Visit. How can Wisconsinite caregivers stay safe and sane for another winter?

Here are a few suggestions:

For Safety

(Avoiding falls, stress injuries, hypothermia, and accidents)

Consider purchasing snow/ice removal if at all possible.



Preparation

- Take your cell phone everywhere all the time!!!
- Carry an **Emergency Car Kit** (blankets, small shovel, flashlight, salt, etc.) Think of being stranded with your care receiver.
- Dress in loose layers.
- Use Head covering (50% of body heat can be lost from the head).
- Cover your mouth and nose. (Cold air puts a strain on the cardiopulmonary system.)

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For more information or if you wish to make comments on this E-Visit, contact Marilyn Joyce 262-833-8764 or email marilyn.joyce@racinecounty.com

- Have extra groceries in the house. Keep current on prescription renewals. Have them delivered to your home or ask someone else to pick them up in extreme cold or hazardous driving weather.

Fall prevention

- Make sure there is good tread on any shoes or boots you and your care partner use. Boot grips e.g. Yaktrax improve traction on packed snow and ice.
- Have snow and ice removed promptly. (Get Help Whenever Possible, even if you have to pay!)
- Stay indoors if possible when hazardous conditions prevail.

Driving

- Travel as little as possible. (See "Preparation.") Weigh the benefit/ risk ratio of scheduled medical appointments before venturing out into dangerous conditions. Procrastinate on any errands that can wait.



Shoveling

- Pace yourself – Clear small amounts at a time with frequent rest breaks
- Avoid twisting your spine – take a step in the direction you are turning, and move your trunk as a unit.
- Get as much help as you can, even if you need to purchase it.

For Sanity

Mind Your Health

- Eat as many different colors of fruit and vegetables as you can.
- Drink plenty of water, especially after shoveling snow.
- Expose yourself to fresh air, and exercise most days and sunlight whenever possible. (Investigate sources of Full Spectrum lighting.)
- Be tough on germs. They really cause havoc in the winter. Wash hands (yours and your care partner's) often. Suds up and scrub for 20 seconds (long enough to sing "Happy Birthday"). When that's not possible to use soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

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Keep Up Some Social Life

- Get respite care and go to lunch with a friend.
- Talk on the phone or video chat with loved ones.
- You can also text and use social media. Get lessons from a youngster if necessary (everybody’s doing it!)
- Try to have some fun with your care partner – look out the window together, especially when it’s sunny. Watch children or scampering squirrels, find a funny old movie, smile or laugh for no reason, have a comfort snack like hot chocolate.

Observe for signs of depression

Changes in sleep or eating habits, lack of interest in things once enjoyed, irritability, trouble concentrating, pervasive sadness, feelings of hopelessness – these can all indicate a medical depression that requires treatment. Report these to your medical provider.

One final winter survival tip comes from neighbor kids across my street. They came pouring out of their doors just as I trudged toward my house that night.

Instead of grumbling, they came out romping and squealing with delight at the snow. They appreciated its whiteness, its softness, packability, its slipperiness. They caught snowflakes on their tongues, exchanged snowballs, threw themselves down and roll. And they all got shovels and had a grand time pushing the snow around. Laughter filled the darkness, and sidewalks were cleared in no time. After his friends had gone back inside, one boy continued to shovel the edge of the street as he sang and whistled!!!

What a blessing to witness a sense of wonder - especially on a dark, snowy winter evening. I wish you and yours many wonder-filled and wonderful moments this winter.



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Winter
Shoveling
Tip:
Get Help
Whenever
Possible, even
if you have to
pay!
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AGING AND
DISABILITY
RESOURCE CENTER
OF RACINE COUNTY

14200 Washington Ave
Strutevant, WI 53177

Phone: 262-833-8777
Email: adrc@racinecounty.com

www.adrc.racinecounty.com

Connecting you to your community's resources

Support Groups for Family Caregivers

For caregivers who are over 60 or are caring for someone over 60 and caregivers (of any age) for people who have dementia. Contact: Marilyn Joyce, 833-8764, or marilyn.joyce@racinecounty.com

Sometimes we are able to make reminder calls to former attendees about an upcoming Support Group. However, this is not always possible. These groups nearly always happen at the scheduled time and place. If you haven't gotten a call, and you have doubts, please call 262-833-8764 or 262-833-8777. See you there!!

General Caregiver Groups

First Friday
12 Noon-1:00 pm

Caregiver Connection

Telephone Group

Call 833-8762 for call-in
Information

Jan 6 Feb 3 March 3

Second Tuesday

1:30-3:00 pm

Yorkville United Methodist
Church

17645 Old Yorkville Rd
(Just off of Highway 20, 3 miles
West of I-94)

Jan 10 Feb 14 March 14

Second Saturday

10:30 am- 12:00 Noon

Atonement Lutheran Church
2915 Wright Ave, Racine

Jan 4 Feb 11 March 11

Third Wednesday

1:30-3:00 pm

Burlington Senior Center
209 N. Main St, Burlington
Eppers Room

Jan 18 Feb 15 March 15

Alzheimer's Association Support Groups:

*For families dealing with any
type of dementia*

First Thursday

10:30 am - 12 Noon

Bethania Lutheran Church
4120 Wright Ave, Racine
(Park and enter in the back of the
building)

Jan 5 Feb 2 March 2

Second Thursday

6:00 – 7:30 PM

Bethania Lutheran Church
4120 Wright Ave, Racine
(Park and enter in the back of
building)

Jan 12 Feb 9 March 9

