

Living with MS

Multiple Sclerosis and Cold Weather

As you all know, MS doesn't affect everyone the same. Surprisingly, this is also true about the cold weather and people with MS. There are some people with MS that welcome the colder weather because the heat exacerbates their symptoms. However, there are also MS patients that have reported a worsening of some symptoms when it is cold out.

Cold weather can slow down your muscles and nerve activity. This can cause problems for healthy people but when MS is already causing your nervous system to slow down this can be especially troublesome for people with MS. Cold body temperatures can cause new or worsening cramping, stiffness, tightness and spasticity. These symptoms can then lead to it being more difficult to use your hands or even make walking more difficult. It can also worsen the MS hug, which is caused by spasticity of the muscles between your ribs.

There are several ways to help prevent the cold temperatures from affecting you. Obviously, living somewhere that doesn't have cold weather would be nice for a lot of people but that isn't a very practical option for most of us. Below are some options to help keep you warm.

- **Dress in layers** during cold weather to help keep you warm when needed and it is easy to remove a layer to keep yourself from getting too hot which can cause its own problems with MS.
- **Warm yourself from the inside** by drinking warm beverages like coffee, cider, tea or hot chocolate. It has been shown that the quick heating of your core by warm drinks does not lead to issues associated with Uhthoff's phenomenon (MS symptoms being worse in the heat).
- **Invest in a device** like a heating pad or space heater or if mobility is limited a remote to control the thermostat.
- **Get some sunshine** during the warmest part of the day. If you have to go outside during the cold weather months try to go out in the middle of the day when it is a little warmer.
- **Don't overcompensate** with too much heat. Very hot showers/baths or fireplaces can quickly cause you to overheat and exacerbate your MS.

It can be quite difficult to find exactly the right temperature considering that the weather changes throughout the day and most of us live with other people who have thoughts on the temperature in the house. Just remember that moderation is best. You do not want to be too hot or too cold so if you are increasing the thermostat or using a space heater, do it a little at a time.

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/cold-and-ms-symptoms-2440834>

<https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Living-Well-With-MS/Diet-Exercise-Healthy-Behaviors/Heat->

2022 is coming

- Please notify Patti or Katherine of any insurance changes.
- Please request refills of your medication before the end of 2021. Prior Authorizations often times need redone in January, especially if your insurance changes and it may take weeks to get it approved.
- You should also notify the manufacturer of your medicine as that can change your financial aid or patient support. A change to Medicare can make you ineligible for manufacturer assistance and you would need to apply for charitable funding. If you have Medicare or Medicare Advantage and are on free drug you need to contact the pharmaceutical company to be rescreened for assistance. Also, charitable funding can go fast so it is best to apply at the beginning of the year. On the SMC website under MS Clinic and MS News you will find a list of some of the assistance options that are out there under the October 2018 newsletter.
- Patti will be retiring in December and Janet will be replacing her. Please let Patti know that we will miss her and welcome Janet if you speak with her.

Upcoming Events:

- Unfortunately, we have had to cancel this year's health fair and night of lights. We hope to be able to resume these events next year.
- Biogen has several virtual programs available for patients. You can find the full list and register at https://www.abovems.com/en_us/home/ms-support-events/ms-events.html

General Information/Tips

- Saunders Medical Center has a patient portal. We encourage all of our patients to register and use the patient portal. To register for the portal please speak with registration either in person or at 402-443-4191.
- Please refrain from calling or texting Melissa or Aaron on their personal cell phones. If you have an emergency after hours please contact our nurse line at 402-443-1448.
- Due to our increasing patient load, we need to start charging patients who cancel their appointment less than **24 hours** in advance.
- Please arrive a **half hour** before your appointment to ensure there is adequate time for the check in process and our providers do not get behind for other patients.
- To schedule appointments please call registration at 402-443-4191. Our nurse is unable to schedule appointments and will have to transfer you.
- **Please call 402-443-4191 to notify Patti(ext 533) or Katherine(ext 539) if you have any change in your medical or prescription insurance. Also, please make sure to give registration both cards at check-in.**
- If you have questions regarding the newsletter, please email Sam sjack@smcne.com.

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