

WINTER WEATHER: LIFE ON HOLD

Cold increases stroke risk for African-Americans

BY AMANDA JONES
THE CHRONICLE

Though it lasts only one quarter of the year, winter remains the most high-alert season for disease and illness. And, while many people are aware of and prepared for the threat of common cold-weather ailments – such as bronchitis, influenza, hypothermia, frostbite, dry skin, and brittle hair – few are aware of the threat of another, more serious winter ailment: stroke.

As reported by the American Stroke Association, many medical journals have conducted studies wherein “most of these studies have reported that stroke incidence peaks in winter” and “the vast majority of stroke events occurred in the home.”

Dr. Gerard Piñol-Ripoll and researchers for the Cerebrovascular Diseases medical journal stated: “Many mechanisms could explain this increase in incidence during winter season: increases

in blood pressure, fibrinogen blood levels and blood viscosity, and variations in cholesterol blood levels; however, acute infections could be an important determinant.”

Dr. Adrian Barnett from the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation at Queensland University of Technology explained, in layman’s terms, that: “Exposure to the cold raises blood pressure because the veins and arteries constrict, which puts extra stress on the heart and circulatory system that can be a real problem for people.” This is especially the case for African-Americans, who are already at high risk for stroke.

According to the CDC, the risk of having a “stroke is nearly twice as high for blacks than for whites, and blacks are more likely to die following a stroke.” Moreover, the organization’s statistics show that stroke is the third most common cause for death in African-Americans, with 34 percent of stroke-related deaths

occurring in individuals under the age of 65. This is largely due to the fact that the major risk factors for stroke – high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking – are frighteningly prevalent amongst African-Americans. The CDC reported that, amongst African-American adults, about one in five smokes cigarettes (18.3 percent overall), about one in three has high cholesterol (30.7 percent of men and 33.6 percent of women), and about one in two has high blood pressure (43 percent of men and 45.7 percent of women). This is only worsened in winter with generally increased poor diet, decreased exercise, decreased vitamin D, and decreased autoimmune function, which add stress to blood vessels, making it easier for blood clots to form and travel to the brain.

However, African-Americans can lower their risk of winter stroke with a few simple actions. Dr. Barnett suggested that it “could be as simple as putting on a hat and gloves because the peak season

for cardiovascular deaths is upon us.” Dr. Pelle G. Lindqvist of the American Heart Association added that taking a vitamin D supplement or going outside may help, since dark “skin acts as a sun shield, and so pale individuals need less time in the sun than more densely pigmented individuals.”

Dr. Niro Siriwardena and researchers for the Vaccine medical journal also stated that the flu shot “is associated with a reduction in incidence of stroke” because “stroke may be triggered by respiratory infections, including influenza.”

In addition, common sense dictates that maintaining healthier choices in diet, along with regular exercise, can also help lower the risk of stroke during winter.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/populations/REMP/black.html or www.strokeassociation.org/.

Don’t forget your pet in cold weather

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Here are some tips on keeping your outside pet warm and healthy for the winter.

*Thoroughly wipe off your dog’s legs and stomach when he comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other chemicals while licking his paws, and his paw pads may also bleed from snow or encrusted ice.

*Consider getting your short-haired breed a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck that covers the dog from base of the tail on the top to the belly underneath. This may seem like a luxury, however to some breeds is a necessity.

*Adult dogs tolerate the cold much better than puppies. If necessary, paper train your puppy inside if he appears to be sensitive to the weather.

*Increased food, particularly protein, will help keep your dog’s fur thick and healthy. This is particularly important if your dog spends a lot of time engaged in

outdoor activities.

*Coolant, like antifreeze, is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Be careful to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle, and consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol.

*Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter. Leave the coat longer for more warmth. When you bathe your dog, completely dry him before taking him out for a walk.

*Pets need a warm place to sleep away from all drafts and off the floor, such as in a dog or cat bed with a warm blanket or pillow in it.

*In the winter, outdoor cats sometimes sleep under the hoods of cars. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed by the fan belt. Before starting the engine, bang loudly on the car hood to give the cat the chance to escape.

*More dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season, so make sure that they always wear I.D. tags. If you’re in Forsyth County, it’s the law.

Don’t let your dogs off the leash on snow or ice. Dogs can lose their scent and easily get lost.

When evening weather conditions in our area hover in the 20s at night, your pet could suffer from hypothermia if there is not adequate shelter from the elements. In some cases when there are wet conditions, it could be a matter of hours before symptoms of hypothermia set in.

If you are a resident of Forsyth County, and have an outside pet that needs a dog house, the county has a limited number to give away. Houses for Hounds program was developed for the purpose of providing free dog houses to lower income Forsyth County residents.

UnChain Winston also provides free straw bedding that can be picked up at the



Bella shows how dogs should be covered when outside in the cold weather.

Forsyth County Animal Control during normal business hours.

Also, the Department of Animal Control’s Animeals program assists elderly, disabled or lower income residents of Forsyth County by offering free pet food for their cats and dogs.

For more information or to send an application for assistance for both programs, you can visit the Animal Control website at www.forsyth.cc/animalcontrol and fill out the online application form or call 336-703-2480 for more information.

Snow gallery



Sisters Karson and Harper Key enjoy sledding in the snow that blanketed the Triad and entire East Coast on Saturday, Jan. 25.



Salem College students and their friends from Wake Forest University brave the cold for snow day festivities and hot chocolate in the Refectory on Saturday, Jan. 23.



Siblings Spencer and Christyanna Cribb take advantage of their extended weekend by enjoying the snow.

Jordan Mitchell takes a break from clearing driveways and walkways in his neighborhood on Saturday, Jan. 25, to pose for a photo.



**King for City Council
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While trekking through the snow to their dorms, Salem College students can admire the view of the sunset over the grave of Sister Oesterlein, founder of Salem College, on Sunday, Jan. 24.

Start off 2016 right...

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