

Health Watch

By N. C. Medical Society

As the cold weather settles in for the next few months most of us will notice that we're keeping our homes quite a bit cooler than we have in past winters. Energy conservation appears to be our patriotic battle cry.

For some, lowering the thermostat is like raising the flag. For others, it is pure economic necessity as we attempt to stretch thinner dollar bills over

fatter heating bills.

But for all of us, regardless of the reason, lower temperatures in the mid-60s are somewhat healthier than higher temperatures in the mid-70s.

Heating our homes and offices during the winter months remove a certain amount of moisture from the air. The higher the temperature, the dryer the air.

Air with little moisture aggravates bronchial and other respiratory problems. It also contributes to a dry throat and nose, coughs, and dry, itchy skin.

As if this weren't enough, the respiratory system does not cope well with sudden changes in the weather. Moving from an overly heated room to the outside cold can be a real shock, particularly to the lungs. Like most everything, the body needs to adjust gradually to changes in temperature.

The dryness of the air in the home can be compensated for even if it remains dry at lower temperatures. For many people the addition of a small humidifier is all that is needed to add a little moisture to the air inside.

There are no major health advantages in keeping the inside temperature somewhat lower than we may have become accustomed. However, there are several minor ones that can add to our comfort and well being during the cold winter months ahead.

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