

Ash's Advice: Article 2

By Ashley Moore

Have you ever heard the word Poikilothermia? Imagine being so cold that it takes hours upon hours under a blanket next to a blazing fire to warm up. This is how an individual with a spinal cord injury feels during the winter. According to Dictionary.com, the word Poikilothermia means "the inability to regulate core body temperature." Naturally, the brain senses the core temperature of one's body decreasing and tells the spinal cord to warm the body up. However, a spinal cord injury disrupts this process, preventing the brain and spinal cord from speaking to each other.

The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis researches in the field of Neuroprotection. Scientists identify the early and progressive injury processes that occur after a spinal cord injury causes irreversible damage. These critical studies will help lessen or even prevent the effects of Poikilothermia. The good news is that individuals living with spinal cord injuries can do several things at home regularly to keep warm.

- Dress in layers. I'm not talking about wearing a cotton T-shirt under a silk blouse. I'm talking about substantial layers. Wool sweaters on top of knit long-sleeved shirts have never let me down. Long, thick socks are a given under warm jeans.
- Cover your head and feet. Human beings lose most of their body heat from their head and feet. Hats are not only fashionable but functional. Even in Florida, I take my flip-flops off for winter and put on boots or sneakers.
- Drink hot beverages. You will feel the hot cocoa engulfing your core.
- Keep a fireplace or space heater nearby. Sitting next to something that emits heat will always give me that last boost of warmth to carry me out of my frozen state. I have even been known to park next to an oven in the kitchen.
- Last but certainly not least, sleep. I can feel frozen under blankets and next to a heater all day, but as soon as I sleep under the same blankets and next to the same heater for a couple hours or so, I am cured! Something about sleeping makes the core body temperature heat up faster.

The Miami Project is always here to help individuals living with spinal cord injuries who experience medical difficulties like Poikilothermia. Scientists, doctors, and fellow individuals with spinal cord injuries work with The Miami Project at the Lois Pope LIFE Center to give medical advice on keeping your core temperature balanced through the winter. Speaking from experience as a quadriplegic, December through February can be a miserable time due solely to our inability to regulate body temperature. Understanding how to avoid the chill will improve your mood in the long run.