

# The Heat Is On: Dementia and Body Temperature

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Have you ever thought about individuals living with dementia and how their body temperature may affect their cognitive performance? Neuroscientists in England, France, and Switzerland have been studying this for years, and now the United States has begun research. A French study found that people with Alzheimer's disease were less able to maintain their body temperature. This has led to explorations into the treatment of thermoregulation. Thermoregulation is the process that allows the body to maintain its core internal temperature.



A British study noted that temperature regulation affects circadian rhythms. Lack of thermoregulation can affect sleep cycles. This may be one reason people with dementia have disturbed sleep.

We already know that body temperature can be increased through physical activity, diet, medications, or simply by increasing the ambient temperature. According to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services and the Long-Term Care Federal Survey Guidelines, facilities must provide “comfortable and safe temperature levels and must maintain a temperature range of 71 to 81 F degrees.”

Activity professionals and anyone working with people diagnosed with dementia should remember to maintain a comfortable ambient temperature. Being too hot or cold is unpleasant for anyone, but for people living with dementia, it may also have more profound effects. Besides minding the thermostat, providing time to rest between activities and promoting hydration can help people stay at a comfortable temperature.