

## A Safety Note from Your Cooperative



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# Powering Our Warmth

We've had a string of cold weather and we have to keep reminding ourselves it's our choice to live here (ha!) Yet, we persist in Minnesota and turn to many devices to keep us warm. Take, for instance, the electric blanket. I must say, whoever invented the electric blanket was a genius! When my daughter was younger, she explained it this way – it's like a taking a bath in bed!



Yet, with any device, are we using them as it was intended and are there any special precautions? Make sure you know the answer to these questions.

### **Can anyone use an electric blanket?**

It seems like it would be OK for anyone to use this type of blanket, but we must realize that it is an electrical appliance. Therefore, it is foolish to allow infants or small children to use these products. Likewise for the same reasons, anyone who is helpless, paralyzed, insensitive to heat or incapable of understanding the control's operation should never be allowed to use these appliances.

### **Is it OK to use an electric blanket during pregnancy?**

Medical websites differ about the use of electric bedding during pregnancy. Some say: "Absolutely no problem". Some say: "Never use". Many say: "Ask your doctor". The Electric Blanket Institute recommends that in the absence of conclusive proof about EMF's and to avoid possible overheating of the fetus, it's better to err on the side of caution and forgo the heated bedding for nine months. Of course, during your pregnancy, you could still use automatic bedding products to pre-warm those icy sheets and then turn it off prior to getting into bed.



### **Can I use an electric blanket if I have a pacemaker?**

Numerous well-known associations, hospitals and doctors advise that electric blankets have not been shown to damage pacemakers or interfere with their functions (see The American Heart Association and the Mayo Clinic). Although the Electric Blanket Institute has never heard of any pacemaker problems due to electric bedding, they always recommend that the individual should check with his or her doctor AND the manufacturer of the pacemaker.

### **Why can't diabetics use an electric blanket?**

You frequently see warnings that people with diabetes should not use electric blankets or pads. The reason for this goes back to the warning about insensitivity to heat. Diabetics often lose some feeling in their legs or arms and could sustain a burn if they cannot feel that a blanket or pad has become too warm. Of course, if the diabetic wishes only to pre-warm the bedding and then turn off the electric blanket or electric mattress pad when getting into bed, this restriction would not apply.

So, enjoy the warmth of your electric blanket this winter season. Or, hop in your soaker tub and surround yourself with the warm bubbles. But, then we have a whole other set of risks to talk about. Hmm, I think I have another article to write – tub safety!

Resource: The Electric Blanket Institute which can be found at [http://www.electricblanketinstitute.com/safety-care.html#should\\_not\\_use](http://www.electricblanketinstitute.com/safety-care.html#should_not_use)

