

# The Post-Standard

## Hot & cold

### Are women naturally more susceptible to a chill?

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Staff writer

When Lisa Belodoff's boss isn't around, she sneaks over to the thermostat to turn up the heat, and sooner or later he's back to turn it down.

In another part of the CXtec building, where teams of people work in cubicles, Jennifer Barry bundles up in thick sweaters, and maybe a scarf, while three feet away teammate Michael Darby works in a T-shirt.

Sound familiar? If it seems to you that women are cold a lot more than often men are, there's science and anecdotal evidence to back that up, says research physiologist Lisa Leon, who is always cold.

Leon works for the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, Thermal and Mountain Division, in Natick, Mass. Her field is temperature regulation and how environmental factors affect it. The army studies that to help deployed soldiers handle extreme conditions.

Not all women are always cold and there's not an answer as to why women feel so cold, she said.

But research shows that men and women react differently to the same heat or cold level, and women seem to lag behind men in how quickly they respond to heat, Leon said. There's a lot of anecdotal evidence to suggest that women get colder.

"And there's animal studies to back that up too, that if you house males and females at the same temperatures, you'll see that their core temperatures are actually different," Leon said.

She cites several reasons why it may be true (she thinks it is) that women are colder than men. One is that women have a smaller body frame and a much larger "surface-area-to-body-mass ratio."

"It's also like babies have a much larger surface-area-to-body-mass-ratio than adults, and as you know, babies are very susceptible to losing heat or gaining heat from the environment. Well, women are much the same way in comparison to men," she said.

Women also have less muscle mass, so typically at a resting state women aren't generating as much heat as men, she said.

There are likely other factors that come into play, too, including hormones and body fat.

"I think it is true, and I think it would have some evolutionary basis way back," Leon said of the differing comfort levels between women and men.

Until further evolutionary change, or some kind of individualized micro-environments become standard, the struggle over climate control goes on, and humans adapt as best they can.

"I always have something warm with me to layer for me because I'm always cold," says Barry.

"I try to put on long sleeves but then I get hot at work," says Darby.

### **Share your advice**

The idea for this story came about one day in the newsroom when the female members of The Daily Dose staff were freezing and the lone male was comfortable. We couldn't come up with a solution to the problem of coping with the climate.

How about you?

Are you and your co-worker or spouse polar opposites?

Is she from V-V-V-V-Venus and he from Mars?

Tell us how you solved the problem and we'll publish highlights on this page in the near future.

Send your advice to [dose@syracuse.com](mailto:dose@syracuse.com).