

Winter Safety Tips



Winter storms and cold temperatures can be hazardous, but if you plan ahead, you can stay safe and healthy. Prepare your home and cars; keep emergency kits stocked; be ready for power outages; wear appropriate clothing; and check on children, the elderly, and pets.

Many people spend time outdoors in the winter working, traveling, or enjoying winter sports. Outdoor activities can expose you to several safety hazards, but you can take these steps to prepare for them:

- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: layers of light, warm clothing; mittens; hats; scarves; and waterproof boots.
- Sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches.
- Learn safety precautions to follow when outdoors.
 - Be aware of the wind chill factor.
 - Work slowly when doing outside chores.

- Avoid traveling when the weather service has issued advisories.
- If you must travel, inform a friend or relative of your proposed route and expected time of arrival.

What to Wear

- Dress infants and children warmly for outdoor activities. Several thin layers will keep them dry and warm. Don't forget warm boots, gloves or mittens, and a hat.
- The rule of thumb for older babies and young children is to dress them in one more layer of clothing than an adult would wear in the same conditions.
- Blankets, quilts, pillows, sheepskins and other loose bedding may contribute to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and should be kept out of an infant's sleeping environment. Sleep clothing like one-piece sleepers is preferred.
- If a blanket must be used to keep a sleeping infant warm, it should be tucked in around the crib mattress, reaching only as far as your baby's chest, so the infant's face is less likely to become covered by bedding materials.



Hypothermia

- Hypothermia develops when a child's temperature falls below normal due to exposure to colder temperatures. It often happens when a youngster is playing outdoors in extremely cold weather without wearing proper clothing or when clothes get wet. It can occur more quickly in children than in adults.
- Symptoms may include: shivering, lethargy, clumsiness, and in more severe cases speech may become slurred and body temperature will decline.
- If you suspect your child is hypothermic, call 911 at once. Until help arrives, take the child indoors, remove any wet clothing, and wrap him in blankets or warm clothes.



Frostbite

- Frostbite happens when the skin and outer tissues become frozen. This condition tends to happen on extremities like the fingers, toes, ears and nose. They may become pale, gray and blistered. At the same time, the child may complain that his/her skin burns or has become numb.
- Many pediatricians feel that bathing two or three times a week is enough for an infant's first year. More frequent baths may dry out the skin, especially during the winter.
- Cold weather does not cause colds or flu. But the viruses that cause colds and flu tend to be more common in the winter, when children are in school and are in closer contact with each other. Frequent hand washing and teaching your child to sneeze or cough into the bend of her elbow may help reduce the spread of colds and flu.

- Children 6 months of age and up should get the influenza vaccine to reduce their risk of catching the flu.

Sun Protection

The sun's rays can still cause sunburn in the winter, especially when they reflect off snow. Make sure to cover your child's exposed skin with sunscreen.

Fire Protection

Winter is a time when household fires occur. It is a good time to remember to:

- **Buy and install smoke alarms on every floor of your home**
- **Test smoke alarms monthly**
- **Practice fire drills with your children**
- **Install a carbon monoxide detector outside bedrooms**

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/WinterWeather/>

[National Center for Environmental Health](#), Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects (EHHE)

American Academy of Pediatrics, 12/10, SafeKids, 11/105