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Cold Weather Tips

When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge. Exposure to cold temperatures, whether indoors or outside, can cause other health problems. Infants and older adults are particularly at risk but anyone can be affected. To keep yourself and your family safe, you should know how to prevent cold-related health problems.

What constitutes extreme cold and its effects can vary across different areas of the country. Whenever temperatures drop decidedly below normal and as wind speed increases, heat can leave your body more rapidly.

When the weather is extremely cold, and especially if there are high winds, try to stay indoors. Make any trips outside as brief as possible, and remember these tips to protect your health and safety:

- **Dress Warmly and Stay Dry**

Adults and children should wear a hat, a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth.

Sleeves that are snug at the wrist.

Mittens (they are warmer than gloves).

Water-resistant coat and boots.

Several layers of loose-fitting clothing.

Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind.

Stay dry— wet clothing chills the body rapidly.

- **Avoid Exertion**

Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly. Remember, your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.

- **Understand Wind Chill**

The Wind Chill index is the temperature your body feels when the air temperature is combined with the wind speed. It is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. As the speed of the wind increases, it can carry heat away from your body much more quickly, causing skin temperature to drop

- **Avoid Ice**

Walking on ice is extremely dangerous. Many cold-weather injuries result from falls on ice-covered sidewalks, steps, driveways, and porches. Keep your steps and walkways as free of ice as possible by using rock salt or another chemical de-icing compound. Sand may also be used on walkways to reduce the risk of slipping.

For more information on Winter Weather: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>