



**Kentucky Public Health**

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## Tips for Surviving the Winter Weather

*52 Weeks of Public Health Spotlight: Cold Weather Safety*



FOR YOUR HEALTH

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**FRANKFORT, Ky. (January 4, 2018)** – With temperatures below freezing, and in some cases near zero, throughout this week, Department for Public Health (DPH) officials emphasize the importance of limiting exposure to the cold and taking steps to prevent hypothermia.

The National Weather Service is reporting bitterly cold air will enter the area this evening, lowering temperatures and increasing risk of frost bite and hypothermia. Precautions should be taken to protect infants, older Kentuckians, pets and livestock. In addition, poorly protected water pipes will be at continued risk of freezing. Harsh conditions are expected to last through the weekend, the weather services reports.

For additional information and helpful tips, please see the guidelines below from the Department for Public Health to help protect yourself and loved ones from the cold.

### **Hypothermia**

Hypothermia occurs when an individual's body temperature drops below what is necessary to achieve normal metabolism and other bodily functions. In severe cases or when the body is not warmed properly, death can result.

The condition occurs most often when an individual is submerged in icy waters. However, people exposed to cold weather and aren't sufficiently prepared also are at an increased risk for the condition. To prevent hypothermia, DPH advises that Kentuckians:

- Wear appropriate clothing. Layer clothes made of synthetic and wool fabrics, which are best for keeping warm. Always remember to wear hats, coats, scarves and gloves.
- Avoid consuming alcohol if outdoors. Alcohol can actually speed the loss of heat from the body.
- Avoid overexertion from activities that cause excessive sweat. This can lead to damp clothing, which causes chills.
- Stay as dry as possible.

Individuals working outside during at this time of year should pay extra attention to these guidelines, particularly those susceptible to overexertion. Symptoms of hypothermia include shivering, altered speech pattern, abnormally slow rate of breathing, cold pale skin and lethargy. Seek medical attention if you or a loved one experiences the signs of hypothermia.

### **Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

In the event of power outages, use precaution if using alternative heat sources. Items such as portable generators, propane gas stoves, ovens heated with gasoline all have been used as heat sources indoors, which can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. DPH advises taking steps to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning following guidelines from the National Center for Environmental Health:

- Don't use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement or garage or near a window.
- Don't run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- Don't burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't properly vented.
- Don't heat your house with a gas oven.

Seek immediate medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning. Early symptoms include headache, nausea, vomiting and fatigue. Be sure to install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall for daylight savings time.

If you are experiencing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning or if you have questions, call the Poison Control hotline at (800) 222-1222.

### **Infant Safe Sleep**

In general, parents and caregivers should follow the ABCs of safe sleep to prevent injury or infant deaths. - **A**lone, on their **B**ack and in a **C**lean, **C**lear Crib. Winter months present a different – but very serious – threat for babies when parents and caregivers resort to using unsafe sleep practices in an effort to keep babies warm.

Here are a few tips to for safe sleep during the winter;

- For added warmth, a baby can be dressed in a one-piece pajama or wearable blanket. Wearable blankets can be layered over undershirts or a onesie. Do not let a baby get too hot by overdressing them or wrapping them in heavy blankets.
- Keep the baby's room at a comfortable temperature and to not overheat the room.
- Do not put a hat on your baby to sleep; there is a risk the hat could slip down, covering the baby's face.
- If a blanket must be used to keep a baby warm, make sure the baby's feet are at the bottom of the crib and the blanket is tucked in around the mattress. The blanket should be no higher than the baby's chest with the baby's arms out.
- Keep all portable heaters away from the baby and baby's sleep area. The baby can overheat if too close to a heater, receive burns or become tangled up in cords of small electric heaters.

More information about safe sleep practices can be found at the SafeSleep Kentucky website <http://www.safesleepky.org/>. The information is part of a statewide campaign aimed at parents, caregivers, health care providers, advocates and others in the childcare community to stress the importance of safe sleep practices in the prevention infant deaths.

More information about hypothermia and carbon monoxide poisoning prevention can be found on the Kentucky Health Alerts website at <http://healthalerts.ky.gov/Pages/WinterSafety.aspx>