



Weather Outside Frightful? Avoid the Chill and Stay Healthy With These Cold Weather Tips

Got mittens?

The first full month of winter brought record shattering cold weather with temperatures plummeting and record snowfall across the U.S. Whether the thermostat dips below freezing or not, you can succumb to cold-related health problems.

"It is important to keep your personal safety in mind when out in the cold," explains Dr. Larry Broda, medical director at [Assurant Employee Benefits](#) -- an insurance provider specializing in assisting companies with 500 employees or less. "Even though a polar vortex is no longer sweeping across the country, people shouldn't take for granted the danger winter weather can pose to the young and old alike."



An Assurant employee bundles up to brave the cold weather. Wearing layers can help combat the cold during this winter season.

- **Stay protected**

Dress in layers, always wear a hat and cover your face and neck with a scarf to reduce heat loss from your body. Choose mittens to protect your hands because they keep fingers close together and warmer than gloves. Also, keep in mind that infants and children are more at risk in the cold. The general rule is they should wear one more layer of clothes than adults.

- **Avoid over-exertion**

It can be easy to forget that you sweat in cold weather, especially when shoveling snow or participating in a winter sport. Sweating leads to additional heat loss and dehydration. Drink lots of water and take periodic breaks to avoid over-exertion.

"Avoiding over-exertion is critical if you have heart or lung disease. If you know that you have health issues, have someone else shovel the snow," said Dr. Broda.

- **Avoid alcohol**

A hot toddy may taste good, but it won't actually warm you up. Your body temperature lowers when you drink alcohol, even though you feel warmer because of the dilation of blood vessels under your skin.

- **Watch for symptoms of hypothermia**

Hypothermia is a condition where one's body temperature drops to dangerous levels. Symptoms of hypothermia can include constant shivering, feeling confused or tired. Hypothermia can lead to other cold-weather complications such as frostbite, a higher risk of cardiac events or worsening of respiratory issues such as bronchitis.

“A person who is experiencing symptoms of hypothermia may not be able to tell if they need help. It is important then, not to go out alone in extremely cold temperatures where you can be affected,” added Dr. Broda.

- **Stay prepared**

Have an emergency kit ready in case you get stuck in the snow. Some blankets, a flashlight and a first-aid kit can help you get through the cold weather.

These simple steps can help reduce your health risk this winter season. For additional information on how you can stay healthy this winter, visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).