



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Stay Safe in the Colder Weather



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Health Department Warns Against Hypothermia Inside and Outside

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BURLINGTON – It may not be as cold as it can be, but it's cold enough to warrant taking precautions, both inside and outside.

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. Hypothermia (below normal body temperature) is most likely at very cold temperatures, but can occur even at cool temps above 40°F if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water.

Hypothermia most often affects older people who have inadequate food, clothing or heating, babies sleeping in cold rooms, people who are outside for long periods such as the homeless, hikers, and hunters, and those who drink alcohol or use drugs. Even healthy adults can become hypothermic if not dressed warmly enough for weather conditions.

Prevent cold-related health problems and be prepared for emergencies. Wear warm clothes, keep babies and older adults in warm rooms, eat well-balanced meals with enough calories, avoid alcohol and drink warm fluids to maintain a healthy body temperature. Check in on older family members and neighbors to make sure they are keeping warm safely, and have enough food and fluids.

In the car, keep a blanket, hat and gloves, first aid kit, flashlight and extra batteries, and high calorie dried or canned foods and a can opener. If you get stuck, don't venture out on foot in extreme cold. Have a cell phone to call for help.

Winter is also an especially risky time for carbon monoxide poisoning – when homes and buildings are closed, and fossil fuels are burned for heat.

Carbon Monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that can cause flulike illness or death. Symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu and include nausea, headache, and dizziness.

Always have working CO and Smoke detectors in your home and in all living areas, ensure all heat sources are ventilating properly, and always operate a generator outdoors and away from the home, particularly windows and doors.

If you suspect CO poisoning, get out of the building and into fresh air immediately, and call 9-1-1 from a safe location.

The Health Department's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program has more information about carbon monoxide poisoning in Vermont: www.healthvermont.gov/tracking/health_co.aspx

For more winter weather and extreme cold preparedness tips, visit <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/>

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