

ENJOYING WINTER

WEATHER:

When you are properly prepared, winter is a fun and exciting time of year. The period of time in which the body is making the adjustment to lower temperatures is the most uncomfortable. Once you have made the transition to dressing for the cold, you can experience many enjoyable winter activities.

One variable element of Canadian winters is the **Wind Chill Factor**.

Wind chill is how cold the temperature feels on exposed skin due to wind. The degree of this phenomenon depends on both air temperature and wind speed. The wind chill temperature (often called the wind chill factor) is always lower than the air temperature. This means that the wind makes the air feel colder than the actual temperature reading on the thermometer. This wind chill factor can be found in weather forecasts on the radio, TV, and internet. (Go to www.theweathernetwork.com and enter London, Ontario, Canada) The sun shines on the coldest days of the winter. Cloudy days are often warmer. You cannot tell how cold it is by looking out the window. Therefore, it is advisable to check a weather forecast each day to prepare for the conditions you are likely to experience.



CLOTHING:

Winter clothing should be wind-proof (to help protect you from the wind chill factor) and waterproof. Cover the pulse points (neck, wrists, and ankles). If your skin is not properly covered, it can freeze after spending some time outside. This is called *frostbite*.

Feet – Keep feet dry and warm with wool socks and insoles in water-proof boots. Buy boots which are made of a material that breathes. Buy boots that have good treads (good traction on the soles). Do not buy boots with leather soles as these are slippery and dangerous on ice.

Hands – Mittens or gloves are necessary. Mittens keep hands warmer than gloves because mittens keep all fingers together, while gloves separate each finger. Also, look for mittens or gloves which are wind-proof.



Head – A good hat will protect your ears and forehead as well as preventing heat loss through the top of your head by keeping the head covered.

Neck – Prevent wind and cold from reaching your neck or blowing inside clothing with a scarf or a turtleneck sweater. In extreme cold, use both.

Body – Layers work well. This means wearing a T-shirt or undershirt under your shirt or sweater and then a jacket as well. Keep undershirts tucked in to prevent cold air from reaching your skin. Allow room for air between layers of clothing. Tight clothing is not warm.

Jacket/Coat – Generally, the longer the jacket or coat, the warmer it will be. A high collar or hood and cuffs that close around the hand will help keep you warm. Look for pockets to slip hands into and a wind-proof lining. The jacket or coat should be large enough to accommodate a sweater. Some jackets have detachable lining which becomes a lighter weight jacket (a good multipurpose, all season choice). Don't forget to add snow pants (ski pants) to keep your legs warm during outdoor activities!

In very cold weather, expose as little skin as possible. Frostbite can happen in a very short time, especially if cold temperatures are accompanied by high winds.

Some Winter Health Issues to Keep in Mind

PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- Get lots of oxygen by spending time outside and changing the air in the room where you sleep or study.
- Exercise regularly, preferably out of doors. Walk rather than take the bus.
- Wear sunscreen and sun glasses to protect skin and eyes from sun damage.
- Get required vitamins from a natural source if possible. Try not to replace balanced diet with vitamins from a bottle, but supplement your diet with lots of fruit and vegetables (Canadian cookbooks are available at public libraries or you can find free recipes on-line).
- Walk safely. Slow down and stay aware. Ice cannot always be seen either underfoot or hanging above your head. Watch out for falling ice when entering and leaving buildings, especially on warmer or sunny days. When walking on ice, shorten your stride length and walk carefully. After a heavy snowfall sidewalks disappear and pedestrians are forced onto the streets. Always walk facing oncoming traffic, and be prepared to climb up onto the snow bank if necessary.
- Check weather reports before leaving the house and dress accordingly. Conditions can change dramatically over 24 hours.
- Get some information on colds and how to help the body recover. Sleep, drink plenty of liquids, and eat fruit. There is no medicine to get rid of a cold. There are over-the-counter medicines to help relieve the symptoms of a cold. You need not consult a doctor about these; ask the pharmacist for advice. Generally, colds take one week to work through the system. Prevention tip: **wash your hands often** and do not put them near your eyes, nose or mouth as these are the most common ways for viruses to be introduced into your body.
- Put moisture into the air inside by boiling a kettle or hanging laundry up to dry in your room. Make sure your bedroom has moist air - moisture protects the sensitive tissues in your nose and throat from drying out and becoming vulnerable to cold viruses. Dry air can also cause headaches. Reduce heat in your living area at night. When the air is dry, your skin will be dry, flaky, and itchy. Use a moisturizer.



EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

Experience lots of laughter and play – embrace winter games and sports, do something silly, be child-like. Find sunshine. Look for a sunny window and sit in it for as long as possible each day. Exposure to daylight will have a positive effect on your mood. Manage your workload to allow for the unexpected. Reduce the stress of having too much work and too little time. Make some time for exercise and physical activity. Find a creative outlet -keep a journal - describe your experiences and tell how you feel about it all. Sketch, paint, dance, sing, use your imagination!

IDEAS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT:

- Find a creative outlet
- Keep a journal
- Find a balance between work and play
- Stay physically active, preferably out of doors
- Laugh
- Make friends
- Manage your time and workload wisely
- Make use of school/community resources

