

## Cold Weather Health Guidelines for Child and Daycare Providers

### General Guidelines

1. Establish a policy and plan to deal with potential consequences of extreme temperatures and winter storms (power outage, lack of transportation). Have an emergency kit available.
2. Allow indoor breaks if children say they are feeling cold, especially with young children. Be watchful for shivering or signs of numbness in faces, ears, hands, or feet.
3. Ensure children are dressed warmly covering exposed skin: insulated and waterproof boots, winter weight coats, mittens (better than gloves), hats (most body heat is lost through the head), and neck warmers (scarves are no longer recommended). Remove drawstrings and use velcro as fasteners to prevent strangulation.
4. Check to make sure children are warm and dry. Wet clothing and footwear should be changed immediately.
5. Offer plenty of warm fluids to prevent dehydration and hypothermia.
6. Tell children not to put their tongues on cold metal.
7. Maintain a heated indoor environment, above 20° Celsius.  
Note: Local municipal bylaws or property standards may prescribe higher temperatures.
8. Ensure that staff are able to recognize and treat symptoms of frostbite and hypothermia (see *Monitoring the appearance and behaviour of a child for cold weather injury*).
9. Educate parents and children about dealing with cold weather including: drinking plenty of fluids, dressing warmly and in layers, and recognizing symptoms of potential cold weather injury.

### During a cold weather warning – additional guidelines:

- Watch children closely for signs of cold weather injuries.
- Consider reducing time spent outdoors.
- Keep children indoors when the temperature is -25°C or -28 wind chill or colder.<sup>1</sup>

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**During a cold weather emergency – additional guidelines:**

- Danger! Outdoor conditions are hazardous – stay indoors.
- Ensure children are in a safe and warm environment.
- Listen to local radio stations, call or visit the websites of your local municipal offices for emergency information and resources.

**Monitoring the appearance and behaviour of a child for cold weather injury.<sup>2</sup>**

<b>Frostbite</b>	<b>Hypothermia</b>
<p><b><u>Look for:</u></b></p> <p><b>Pink</b> – areas of reddened skin <b>Pain</b> – painful affected areas <b>Patches</b> – patches of whitish, waxy skin <b>Pricklies</b> – numbness or tingling sensation</p> <p><b><u>Action:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the child indoors and hold the affected area between your warm hands.</li><li>• Do not rub the frozen area(s), this will cause further damage.</li><li>• If sensation and colour does not quickly return to normal, contact the child's parents, who should then contact their physician.</li></ul>	<p><b><u>If the child is:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• shivering uncontrollably,</li><li>• seems disoriented or lethargic, or</li><li>• if his/her body temperature has dropped considerably (below 35°C/95°F).</li></ul> <p><b><u>Action: This is a medical emergency – call 911</u></b></p> <p><b><u>While waiting for help:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the child indoors,</li><li>• remove wet clothing,</li><li>• wrap the child in warm blankets,</li><li>• monitor breathing</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Canadian Pediatric Society (2002) Winter Safety. [www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)

<sup>2</sup>The Hospital for Sick Children (2006) Baby its cold outside.

**For further information:**

**Personal Medical Advice**

Contact your family physician or Telehealth 1-866-797-0000

**General cold weather health related information**

KFL&A Public Health

[www.kflapublichealth.ca](http://www.kflapublichealth.ca)

**Where to obtain services**

Contact your local municipality or township office

County of Frontenac 613-548-9400 [www.frontenaccountry.ca](http://www.frontenaccountry.ca)

City of Kingston 613 546-0000 [www.cityofkingston.ca](http://www.cityofkingston.ca)

County of Lennox & Addington 613 354-4883 [www.lennox-addington.on.ca](http://www.lennox-addington.on.ca)