

facts on

Winter Safety Tips

Cold Temperatures

Proper Clothing

- Have your child dress in layers. Layers can be added or taken off as the temperature changes.
- Cover heads with a warm, close-fitting hat that protects the ear lobes.
- A tubular neck warmer should be used instead of a scarf, but if a scarf must be used, make sure it is tucked into the jacket to avoid strangulation. Remove all cords and drawstrings from under the chin.
- Be aware of the wind chill factor. Wind greatly speeds up the process of body heat loss.
- Remove wet clothes and shoes as soon as possible to avoid additional chilling.

Infants in infant carriers should not be dressed in thick clothing or multiple layers. Instead place warm blankets over the infant after he or she has been secured tightly in the seat. This makes it easier to regulate his or her temperature to avoid overheating (a risk factor for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and ensures there is no extra padding between the infant and the harness. The extra padding would compress in a crash and cause the straps to become loose, possibly leading to injuries.

Dealing with Frostbite and Hypothermia

Frostbite occurs when body tissue freezes. It usually affects the hands, feet, and face. The signs of frostbite are a tingling or pain in the area, the skin may appear white and feel hard, and the tissue underneath will feel soft. If you suspect frostbite:

- Warm the affected area using body heat.
- Do not rub the area with snow because this will not allow temperatures to rise above freezing.

Hypothermia occurs when the body loses more heat than it can produce and the core body temperature drops below 35°C (95°F). The stages in hypothermia range from the early stage where the child may feel the need to warm up to the critical state where the child becomes unconscious. If you suspect hypothermia, call 911 or an ambulance, or transport the child to the nearest medical facility. Before medical help is available:

- Take the child to a warm, dry place, and remove any wet clothing.
- Warm the whole body by wrapping the child in a blanket or giving the child a lukewarm bath.

For More Information

Contact:

1319 Colony Street
Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1
Bus. 306.651.4300
Fax. 306.651.4301
info@skprevention.ca
www.skprevention.ca

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Winter Sports

Tobogganing and Sledding

- Make sure your child wears a helmet with a thin, warm cap underneath. A ski or hockey helmet is recommended as they are designed for use in cold weather and for similar falls and speeds.
- Choose a hill that is cleared of trees, rocks, and other dangers and has a level area at the bottom for safe stopping, away from roads and streets.
- Make sure your child knows to slide down the middle of the hill and to move out of the way quickly when they reach the bottom. They should climb up the side of the hill while watching above for other tobogganers.

Skating

- Make sure your child wears a Canadian Standards Association (CSA) approved hockey helmet because these helmets are tested for falls on ice.
- Your child's skates should fit snugly and provide firm ankle support. When carrying skates, have skate guards in place.
- When your child is skating on lakes or rivers, make sure the ice is smooth and at least 15 centimetres or 6 inches thick. Stay away from newly-formed ice or ice with open water areas.
- Teach your child to skate in a group - never alone and always in safe areas, free of obstacles and away from traffic.

Skiing and Snowboarding

- A ski or snowboard helmet is recommended for your child to prevent a head injury.
- Make sure your child understands the signs used to indicate the level of difficulty of a hill.

- Always check your child's equipment to make sure it is in good condition and fits properly.
- Teach your child to always:
 - Follow the buddy system, and never ski or snowboard alone.
 - Stay on marked trails, and follow other rules of the slopes.
 - Stay alert to hazards such as rocks, trees, ice patches, and changes in weather and visibility.

Snowmobiling

- All snowmobile operators born on or after January 1, 1989 are required to complete a snowmobile safety training course.
- Your child must be 12 years of age or older to complete the safety course and to operate a snowmobile.
- A child younger than 16 years of age must be supervised when operating a snowmobile.
- Make sure your child is wearing close-fitting clothing, a helmet, and goggles.
- Snowmobilers should always:
 - Stay off roads except to cross. Stop completely and yield to traffic then make a direct crossing.
 - Be aware of hazards such as thin ice, fences, culverts, and railway tracks. Travel unfamiliar terrain slowly, especially if travelling at night.
 - The snowmobile should have rear-view mirrors and antenna flags. Carry a cellular phone, repair tools, and an emergency kit on longer rides.

This resource was adapted from information provided on the websites of:

SafeKids Canada.

Health Canada.

Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, Cold Winter Temperatures: Children are at Risk Fact Sheet, 2002.

This resource may be photocopied.

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