

# Health Unit Media Release

January 17, 2011



## Health Unit alerts the public to be cautious during cold weather

The Leeds Grenville and Lanark District **Health Unit alert's the public to take appropriate precautions during the cold weather.** This colder weather is expected to last throughout today.

**Some conditions during cold weather can cause very serious health conditions and even death.** With a wind chill of -15°C or colder, unprotected skin can freeze in under 30 minutes, and the risk of developing hypothermia is very high. **During very cold weather, everyone is at risk, however the elderly, infants and children, people taking certain prescription medications, and people with pre-existing health conditions are in greater danger.** There is also an increased risk of hypothermia for outdoor workers and people living without adequate heat or shelter.

**During these cold temperatures, the Health Unit strongly encourages the public to check on a neighbour or friend who may be isolated, disabled, or living alone and have a greater risk of suffering cold weather related injuries.** The Health Unit also encourages homeless people to get in from the cold.

### **During cold weather everyone should take the following precautions:**

- Wear layers of warm dry clothing including a hat, mitts, and a layer to block the wind
- Drink warm non-alcoholic beverages, non-caffeinated beverages such as herbal teas, apple cider or soup.
- Cover exposed skin surfaces when outdoors
- Maintain a heated environment of around 20°C/ 68°F
- Be aware of how your medications or health conditions may increase your risk
- Be aware of the early signs of frostbite: white or gray spots on skin or areas having lost feeling. Tingling and pain can also be a warning sign of frost bite usually in the hands, feet, nose and ears.
- Beware of the early signs of hypothermia: unable to think clearly, shivering, loss of memory, lethargy slurred speech or loss of consciousness. Immediate medical attention is required.
- Be aware of the dangers of using an oven or space heater as a heating device.

For more information on how to protect yourself during extreme cold visit the Health Unit website at: [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org) or go to <http://www.mb.ec.gc.ca/air/wintersevere/index.en.html> or <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp>. For specific cold weather questions call the Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685.