

Media Release

Jan 23, 2013



Extreme Cold Weather Warning in Effect

As temperatures dip below minus 25 and are combined with a wind chill of below minus 28, the Health Unit raises the cold alert to a warning. Conditions will continue to be monitored by staff.

Some conditions during cold weather can cause very serious health conditions and even death. 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 extreme 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 are at greater risk.

The extreme cold weather can also increase the risk of frostbite and hypothermia:

Frostbite is the freezing of skin and the layers of tissue underneath the skin. It usually occurs when temperatures drop below -4°C . Frostbite is hard to feel, so make sure to check for white or grey spots on skin or areas that have lost feeling. Sometimes tingling or pain can be a warning sign of frostbite. Frostbite usually occurs in hands, feet, nose and ears.

Hypothermia takes place when heat is lost from your body faster than your body can create it. This can be very dangerous because once body temperature goes too low, an individual is not able to think clearly. Signs of hypothermia include: shivering, loss of memory, lethargy, slurred speech or loss of consciousness. If you see any of these symptoms, get medical attention right away.

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 or non-caffeinated beverages such as herbal tea, apple cider or soup
- Cover exposed skin surfaces when outdoors
- Stay indoors whenever possible
- Maintain a heated environment of around 20°C / 68°F
- Be aware of how your medications or health conditions may increase your risk of injury from cold weather
- Be aware of the early signs of frostbite and hypothermia
- Be aware of the dangers of using an oven or space heater as a heating device.
- Be prepared if you are travelling and keep extra warm clothing and blankets in your vehicle

For more information on protecting yourself during extreme, cold visit the Health Unit website at: www.healthunit.org or call 1-800-660-5853. You can also like the LGLHealthUnit Facebook page for important public health updates.