



Brrrr. It's Cold Out There—Outdoor Safety in the Winter

The days will soon be getting longer, but it's still Winter out there. When the temperature drops significantly below normal it's sometimes a challenge to stay warm and safe.

To maintain your body temperature when it's cold outside, eating well-balanced meals will help. You shouldn't drink alcoholic or caffeinated beverages since these cause your body to lose body heat more rapidly. Warm, sweet beverages or broth will help maintain your body temperature. Of course, if you have any dietary restrictions, you should consult with your doctor.

Try to stay indoors when the weather is extremely cold and if you have to go out remember to:

- Cover up and dress in layers: wear a hat, cover your face and mouth with a scarf or knit mask; have sleeves that are snug at the wrist; wear mittens and a water resistant coat and boots. Shivering is the first sign that your body is losing heat. This is a sign to get back indoors.
- Avoid exertion: cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling and doing heavy outdoor chores. Since your body is already working hard to stay warm, dress warmly and work slowly.

When you listen to the weather in the winter you frequently here mention of the term "wind chill". The Wind Chill index is the temperature your body feels when the air temperature is combined with the wind speed. It is based on the rate of heat loss from exposed skin caused by the effects of wind and cold. As the speed of the wind increases, it can carry heat away from your body much more quickly, causing skin temperature to drop. The following Wind Chill Chart* below (from the National Weather Service) shows the difference between actual air temperature and perceived temperature, and the amount of time until frostbite occurs.

There's a lot more to think about when it comes to winter safety. To find out additional information about how to be safe in the winter and how to prepare your home for cold weather, what to do while traveling in the winter, how to prepare your car for winter driving, how to be safe during outside winter recreation, what to do if you get stranded, Check out the following website at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp>

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NWS Windchill Chart

