

Health tip: Cold weather & wintertime safety

Understanding how cold weather affects your health and daily life is essential for staying safe during the winter months. Winter storms often bring hazardous conditions like extreme cold, freezing rain, sleet, heavy snow, ice and high winds that may disrupt transportation, cause power outages and limit access to essential services. Understanding how winter weather impacts your life – and knowing how to prepare – can help you protect yourself and your loved ones.¹



Staying Safe Indoors

- Weatherproof your home: Insulate, caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows, install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Heat your home safely: Use inspected fireplaces/heaters; avoid extension cords; keep portable space heaters away from flammable items.
- Protect the water supply: Prevent frozen pipes by leaving all water taps slightly open so they drip continuously, allow heated air to reach pipes by opening cabinet doors beneath kitchen and bathroom sinks, and using bottled or boiled snow water if needed.⁴

Staying Safe Outdoors

- Dress warmly in layers and stay dry. Be sure to also wear a hat, scarf, mittens and water-resistant coats and boots.
- Stay off the ice; many injuries related to cold weather occur because of falls on ice-covered surfaces. Keep steps and walkways as free of ice as possible by using rock salt or sand.
- Avoid overexertion: if you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold.^{4,5}

Key facts

1,024

Number of deaths in 2023 in the U.S. due to excessive cold/hypothermia.²

Vulnerable groups

include infants, children, older adults, low-income households.³

Winter storms

may disrupt transportation, power, heat, and communication.¹

Travel Safety

- Monitor weather advisories by listening to radio or television reports issued by the National Weather Service.
- Avoid traveling in low visibility conditions or on ice-covered roads, overpasses and bridges.
- If you must travel prepare your vehicle by having it inspected by a mechanic prior to travel and carry an emergency supply kit that contains jumper cables, blankets, snacks, water, etc.
- Drive slowly, take a mobile phone with you and inform someone of your travel plans.^{4,6}



Sources:

1. Red Cross. <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/winter-storm.h.html>. 2025. Accessed November 2025.
2. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/wr/mm7406a6.htm>. 2025. Accessed November 2025.
3. NCHH. <https://nchh.org/information-and-evidence/learn-about-healthy-housing/emergencies/extreme-cold/adverse-health-effects-and-susceptible-populations/>. 2022. Accessed November 2025.
4. CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/winter-weather/safety/stay-safe-during-after-a-winter-storm-safety.html>. 2024. Accessed November 2025.
5. Ready. <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>. 2025. Accessed November 2025.
6. Ready. <https://www.ready.gov/car>. 2025. Accessed November 2025.